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SURRENDER TO NIGHT

COLLECTED POEMS OF GEORG TRAKL

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Collected Poems of Georg Trakl

Selected and translated by Will Stone

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Anthony Vivis (1943–2013)

Translator of German literature, co-translator and friend

CONTENTS

Title Page
Dedication
List of Poems
Acknowledgements
Georg Trakl (1887–1914): A Brief Biography
Approaching Silence: The Poetry of Georg Trakl
Translator’s Note

Poems, 1913
Sebastian in Dream, 1915
Poems Published in *Der Brenner*, 1914–15
Uncollected Poems and Prose

Chronology
About the Publisher
Copyright

LIST OF POEMS

Poems, 1913

The Ravens
The Young Maid
Romance to Night
In Red Foliage Filled with Guitars…
Music in the Mirabell
Melancholy of Evening
Winter Dusk
Rondel
Benediction to Women
The Beautiful City
In an Abandoned Room
Thunderstorm Evening
Evening Muse
Dream of Evil
Spiritual Song
In Autumn
Towards Evening My Heart
The Peasants
All Souls
Melancholy
Soul of Life
Transfigured Autumn
Forest Nook
In Winter
In an Old Album

Metamorphosis
Little Concert
Mankind
The Walk
De Profundis
Trumpets
Dusk
Smiling Spring
Suburb in the Föhn
The Rats
Dejection
Whispered in the Afternoon
Psalm
Rosary Songs
Decay
In the Homeland
An Autumn Evening
Human Wretchedness
In the Village
Song of Evening
Three Glances into an Opal
Night Song
Helian

Sebastian in Dream, 1915

SEBASTIAN IN DREAM

Childhood
Song of Hours
On the Way
Landscape
To the Boy Elis

Elis
Hohenburg
Sebastian in Dream
On the Moor
In Spring
Evening in Lans
On the Mönchsberg
Kaspar Hauser Song
By Night
Transformation of Evil

AUTUMN OF THE LONELY

In the Park
A Winter Evening
The Cursed
Sonja
Along
Autumn Soul
Afra
Autumn of the Lonely

SEVEN-SONG OF DEATH

Rest and Silence
Anif
Birth
Decline
To One Who Died Young
Spiritual Dusk
Western Song
Transfiguration
Föhn
The Wayfarer

Karl Kraus
To the Silenced
Passion
Seven-song of Death
Winter Night

SONG OF THE DEPARTED

In Venice
Limbo
The Sun
Song of a Captive Blackbird
Summer
Close of Summer
Year
The West
Springtime of the Soul
In Darkness
Song of the Departed

DREAM AND DERANGEMENT

Poems Published in *Der Brenner,* 1914–15

In Hellbrunn
The Heart
Sleep
The Thunderstorm
Evening
Night
Melancholy (II)
The Homecoming
Lament
Surrender to Night

In the East
Lament (II)
Grodek
Revelation and Downfall

Uncollected Poems and Prose

The Three Ponds in Hellbrunn
St Peter’s Churchyard
A Spring Evening
In an Old Garden
Evening Roundelay
Night Soul
Desolation
De Profundis (II)
At the Cemetery
Sunny Afternoon
Aeon
Dream of an Afternoon
Luminous Hour
Childhood Memory
An Evening
Season
In Wine Country
The Dark Valley
Summer Dawn
In Moonlight
Fairy Tale
Lament (III)
Springtime of the Soul (II)
Western Twilight
Daydreaming at Evening

Winter Walk in A-minor
Ever Darker
December
(Untitled)
Delirium
At the Edge of Old Waters
Along Walls
(Untitled)
(Untitled)
(Untitled)
(Untitled)
(Untitled)
In the Evening
Judgement
(Untitled)
(Untitled)
To Novalis
Nocturnal Lament
To Johanna
Melancholy (III)
To Lucifer
Daydreaming
Psalm (II)
Age
The Sunflowers

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GEORG TRAKL (1887–1914): A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Georg Trakl's life was short, in the fabled tradition of the *poète maudit*, which he undoubtedly was and thought himself to be. Yet he was so much more. The unclassifiable, morbidly introspective poetry which mesmerizes new generations of readers was the sole fruit of his troubled existence and confirms his status as one of the key German-language poets of the twentieth century. Trakl's poetic legacy was forged over five dynamic years for European culture, 1909–14, before the poet vanished in cruel circumstances in the opening months of the First World War. Trakl's life was principally spent in Austrian towns and cities, first in the sanctuary of the romantic Baroque surroundings of Salzburg, then later in the, for him, more alienating metropolis of Vienna and in the home city of his publisher, Innsbruck. Apart from a trip to Venice in the summer of 1914, Trakl spent most of his short life in these three locations. Following the poet's ordeals on the Eastern Front in Galicia, a final tragic denouement took place in the Polish city of Kraków.

Georg Trakl was born on 3rd February 1887, the fifth of seven children, in the Schaffner House (now the "Trakl-Haus" museum) on Waagplatz 1a in Salzburg. His Hungarian father and Slavic mother had immigrated in 1879 from Wiener Neustadt and in 1893 his father, Tobias, opened a hardware store on nearby Mozartplatz, to which the family moved, taking spacious apartments on the first floor. Some of Trakl's early poems concern subjects he saw from the windows of these bright-lit rooms, namely the Mozart statue in the square and the surrounding mountains of the Gaisberg, the Kapuzinerberg and the Mönchsberg. The building is now a café, offering a view largely unchanged since Trakl's time, and its outer wall bears a discreet commemorative plaque. Here the Trakl children, virtually abandoned by their mother, were taught by a Catholic governess from Alsace who introduced them to French, the required language of the European cultural elite. Trakl's early life was one of the outward security of a middle-class milieu, with piano lessons, visits to the theatre, happy hours spent in the rustic summer house of a nearby idyllic garden—a traditional bourgeois upbringing which the

Trakl parents, despite their immigrant roots, were keen to espouse for those belonging to the *Bildungsbürgertum*.[*]

Period photographs show the ubiquitously sailor-suited and lace-adorned infants obediently lined up in age and height for formal portraits. But the mother, Maria Catharina, was self-absorbed and distant, more concerned with her bibelots and antiques than with her children, and she was also a little too keen on opium, a vice that would later contribute to her son's ruin. It was the governess, then, who shaped the children's adolescence and it was she who introduced young Georg to French-language poetry: the requisite Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, but also, importantly, the strange, dreamlike poetry of the Belgian poet and dramatist Maurice Maeterlinck. In childhood Trakl became particularly close to one sister, Margarethe or Grete. The nature of this infamous, arguably incestuous, relationship, whose parameters have never been fully confirmed and perhaps should not be, proved a defining existential moment for the acutely sensitive boy, and later left him wracked by guilt at the desire he felt for his sibling and what had taken place between them in childhood. Though apart much of the time in adulthood, their spirits remained closely interwoven throughout their lives, both destined for struggle and unhappiness, victims of depressive illness and suicidal impulses.

Trakl was a conventional student and there was little to mark him out. He began to read Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, required reading along with the Symbolist poets, and his own early poems he read aloud to his classmates. He impulsively left school early to train as a pharmacist, his assumption being that he could more easily gain access to the narcotics with which he was already locked in a fatal embrace, completing three years of on-the-job training at the Apotheke "Zum weissen Engel" (the White Angel) at Linzergasse 5 in Salzburg between 1905 and 1908. In these years Trakl was part of a literary group called "Apollo", which was later renamed "Minerva". A telling photograph from 1906 shows the earnest young dilettantes posed awkwardly around an ornate antique table positioned on a lawn before a house romantically overgrown with ivy. Encouraged by Gustav Streicher, a local playwright, Trakl wrote two dramatic texts, "Totentag" and "Fata Morgana", which were shown at the prestigious city theatre. But they proved a critical failure and Trakl ceremonially destroyed his notebooks and reverted to poetry.

Trakl's position in the pharmacy facilitated his access to veronal, opium and later cocaine. He grew increasingly dependent on a range of drugs to cope with what the poet Rainer Maria Rilke would later term "the unbearable weight of his own existence". Trakl's lifestyle became more anti-bourgeois and erratic, and by now he was an avid reader of the magazine *Die Fackel* (*The Torch*), edited by Karl Kraus, which regularly lambasted Austrian politics and institutions. Trakl eschewed crowds, preferring solitude, long walks and lonely vigils in country taverns. His early poems are saturated with memory images of this wandering country life in the landscape around his home city, visions of the drunken man returning from the tavern through the dusking wood. Trakl found solace roaming the wooded hills of the mountains, or lingering in the romantic environs of the castle of Anif, or the palace and gardens at Hellbrunn. In 1908 Trakl abruptly left the provincial life and his minor post at Apotheke "Zum weissen Engel", moving to Vienna to study pharmacy.

Faced with the alienating effects of the metropolis, Trakl's innate sense of anxiety and despair at mankind's spiritual decline was heightened by what he experienced and observed in the capital. In Europe this was an era of burgeoning materialism and technological change, progress appeared prescribed, unstoppable, but nationalism was emboldened, there were ugly stirrings around social Darwinism, dark tributaries leading into the eventual rapids of revolution and totalitarianism, the final paroxysm Trakl painfully anticipates. The poet's alienation from the decadent city multitude now crucially fused with the earlier formative atmosphere of rural solitariness, of being the outsider apart from the normal country folk, of being in some sense damned, a "lonely one", in the company of madmen, beggars and prostitutes, the fallen with whom he felt a bond. Trakl's distinctive poetic language seems to evolve, to gather momentum out of this difficult Vienna period.

Trakl's close school friend Erhard Buschbeck also moved to Vienna at this time, and through Buschbeck's social circle Trakl became acquainted with figures from the "Wiener Moderne" such as Adolf Loos, Arnold Schönberg und Oskar Kokoschka. Later Trakl would visit Kokoschka almost daily in his studio and there admired his 1913 painting *Die Windsbraut* (*Bride of the Winds*), a tortured vision of the relationship between the enigmatic Alma Mahler and the painter who idolized her. Trakl celebrated this powerful painting by referring to it in his poem "Die

Nacht" ("Night"). A number of Trakl's poems also appeared in the combative Expressionist art paper *Der Ruf* (*The Cry*) which championed, amongst others, Egon Schiele, whose brutally honest, risqué erotic drawings of prostitutes and models must surely have struck Trakl.

In the summer of 1910, Trakl finally achieved his title of "Magistrum artis pharmaceuticae" and was qualified to practise as a pharmacist. Tobias Trakl died, and with him in the space of a few years the family business. It was essential now for the disorderly poet to establish himself financially, but his periods of work were erratic, short-lived and fraught with anxiety, and money issues dogged him. He even sold his cherished Dostoyevsky volumes and those of Nietzsche, Rilke, Wilde and Shaw in order to make ends meet. Grete's decision to marry at this juncture did not help Trakl's mental state, and as a result he became ever more alienated from the family in Salzburg.

In 1912 Trakl secured a position in an Innsbruck pharmacy. Buschbeck introduced him to Ludwig von Ficker, the founder and editor of *Der Brenner*, named after the legendary pass into Italy close by. Ficker saw the genius in Trakl's poetry from the outset and became a fervent supporter, unfailingly publishing his poems in issue after issue. In all, Trakl placed sixty-four poems in the magazine. *Der Brenner* then became the showcase for his work, the bedrock of his publications and the channel to his increasing renown. The loyal Ficker grew to be a close friend and exhibited a paternal influence, whilst also providing financial support and lodgings to the wayward poet. Finding the work at the pharmacy in Innsbruck intolerable due to his increasing inability to face the public, Trakl resorted more and more to dependency on drugs and alcohol to function. Attempts to find other jobs in Vienna all came to nothing. Typically, Trakl would take up a new position and then abruptly leave, unable to bear the responsibilities thrust upon him.

With the assistance of Karl Kraus, Trakl's first collection, *Gedichte* (*Poems*), appeared in 1913 from Kurt Wolff Verlag in Leipzig. In August he made a rare trip with friends outside of his native land, to Venice. An extraordinary photograph shows Trakl, incongruous in a dark bathing suit, wandering the sands of the Lido. When asked of his opinions of the fabled city, he described Venice as "the gateway to hell". Returning to Innsbruck, he worked on his second collection, *Sebastian im Traum* (*Sebastian in Dream*), which would only appear in 1915, after his death.

In March 1914 Trakl rushed to Grete's bedside after she suffered a miscarriage and tried unsuccessfully to persuade her to leave Berlin for Salzburg. He left in despair, lamenting later of having witnessed "terrible things". He never saw his sister again. A beleaguered Trakl searched around desperately for options—he spoke of working in Borneo or Albania as a pharmacist—but these proved only delusions. Then came a turning point. In the spring of 1914 he received a generous donation from a certain Ludwig Wittgenstein (Rilke was another recipient), which meant that his financial position would again be secure. However, the fortunate poet was in such a state of high anxiety that he was apparently unable to summon the courage and strength of mind to stay in the bank long enough to draw on the sum, fleeing in terror from the tellers. By then war was upon Europe; Trakl was soon mobilized and would never take advantage of Wittgenstein's timely gift.

Having volunteered as a medical orderly in August 1914, Trakl joined a unit destined for the Eastern Front in Galicia. There he joined elements of the Austrian Army who took part in the Battle of Grodek, a bloody defeat for the Austrians. Without proper medical resources, Trakl was obliged to tend to over ninety seriously wounded men in a barn. Many of the soldiers begged him to end their misery with a pistol. The raw suffering before him meant Trakl's fears for humankind were confirmed with gruesome realism, and thus a mind already perilously fragile broke decisively. One evening at the officers' meal, Trakl suddenly pushed his plate away, stood up and declared his intention to end his life. A revolver was wrestled from his hand. Following this public collapse, he was admitted to the garrison hospital in Kraków for close observation. On hearing the disturbing news, the loyal Ficker rushed to his aid and strenuously argued for Trakl's release. Fatefully, he was rebuffed by the physician in charge and forced to depart with his charge still incarcerated. Trakl succumbed to an intractable despair and expressed himself in a letter as being already "beyond the world". He wrote a brief final will and testament, to which he added two final poems, "Klage" ("Lament (II)") and "Grodek". During the night of 3rd November 1914, Trakl took an overdose of cocaine smuggled into his cell by a sympathetic guard and died of heart failure. Three days later he was interred in the Radowicki Cemetery in Kraków, but in 1925 Ficker arranged for Trakl's remains to be relocated to his local cemetery at Mühlau, near Innsbruck.

* *Bildungsbürgertum*: enlightened social class, based on material wealth, cultural education and human perfectibility achieved through a classical education. The term originates from Germany, dating back to the mid-eighteenth century.

APPROACHING SILENCE: THE POETRY OF GEORG TRAKL

I

Trakl's elusive, enigmatic poems have been the subject of interminable debate in the modern age. The resulting presentations may illicit admiration from the reader, but also frustration. As the rational mind struggles to explain what cannot be explained, these dreamlike, otherworldly poems have been dubbed mood paintings, tonal poems, impressionist collages, colour-coded dream images and so on. The general consensus is that they are unique, a visionary flare sent up at a specific point in European history, at a vital schism between the old order and the new, lending the work a special force, insistence and sense of being outside linear time. Today the word "visionary" is of course catastrophically over-employed in a culture which bestows it on almost anyone with a modicum of talent in his or her field; but occasionally in our European culture a special case emerges and we recognize the rarity of a poetry, music or painting that sounds or looks like nothing else of its kind before or since. Trakl's poems strike the senses in both a visual and an audible way, their imagery is innately mystical, reverberations of some primordial longing; yet his work is also uncompromisingly apocalyptic, the dislocation at the heart of the modern age always strongly present.

In the English-speaking world there have been a number of studies of Trakl's poetry over the last five decades. These are in the main academically driven works by German-literature scholars, whether attempts to elucidate the existential religious contours of their subject, to decipher the composition and symbolism of the complex dream imagery which is the hallmark of Trakl's oeuvre, or to thresh out elements of his short biography, notably his incestuous relationship with his sister Grete. Such works, the fruit of considerable research, often prove interesting and even helpful; but none of these studies, any more than the attempt by

the philosopher Martin Heidegger to analyse Trakl's colour palette, are wholly successful, nor do they explain how Trakl could, with a handful of lines on a page, encompass a mood or feeling so consummately.

There are also of course a range of introductions available, like so many smaller craft attending the growing flotilla of translations of Trakl's poetry into English. Each translator, one perhaps more a scholar, the other more a poet, who has resided within Trakl's image-extravagant universe wishes to express their ardently held personal take on the poetry and the particular challenges they faced in landing their cargo safely on English or American shores. Each translator, because of their perhaps long-standing personal connection with the poems, would like to think they have an exclusive angle on this prescient spirit which has somehow eluded the others. They may be suspicious of, even in certain depressing cases hostile to, the other translators who have dared to breach their domain, so they try all the harder to nail their colours to the mast, to ensure that their assumptions, laced with critical seriousness, are foremost.

Then there will be the more abundant crop of German-language essays and biographies, from the post-war years to the present day, an international slough of monographs and theses. And there will be well-organized conferences at which leading scholars will deliver papers and there will be applause and there will be centenary memorials for birth, for death, there will be still more carefully organized debates and colloquiums and there will be pilgrimages. But where exactly does all this "activity" lead in terms of helping the general reader meaningfully to interpret the supernatural forces and secret alchemy that must have colluded to enable human inwardness to deliver such a vision—borne so painfully by an awkward, ungainly, self-loathing young man in provincial Catholic Austria in the years preceding the First World War?

The answer is: it leads nowhere, or at least the *terra firma* it may initially promise suddenly begins to shift beneath the reader, making any sense of firm anchorage a chimera. For to approach Trakl's poetry with our carefully amassed, painstakingly interwoven thought and words, with the language each of us has been granted at birth, in whichever country on this earth, merely causes a frustrating veil to descend over that which we wish so ardently to illuminate. To encounter Trakl's reclusive poetry with the tools at our disposal is to remain permanently cut off, like

passengers marooned on a craft, who see the verdant island they wish to land on but can never actually reach, due to unseen currents that keep them back from the line of surf breaking on the shore. They see the poetic language glinting there like ice in the sun on a glacier, see it clearly; but how do they read it and how deeply do they feel it? At which level of receiving does their consciousness come to rest, and is there for the next reader still further to go? Kafka can be read on a variety of levels, so why not Trakl? In order to create these arcane visions, “this chaos of rhythm and images” as he himself termed it, Trakl surely needed access to another undisclosed language, a mysterious connecting filament which hovers about his own poetic one and that of the external world.

But what is this language and can we really term it as such? Walter Benjamin, in his legendary essay on translation, “The Task of the Translator”, evocatively suggests of an elusive pure language, “that ultimate essence”, which it is the task of translators to liberate from the original. Rilke, the curator of solitude, had the rare capacity to articulate inwardness, and, like a skilled watchmaker, by employing the most sensitive adjustments, sought to pinpoint Trakl’s poetic essence. In 1915, following Trakl’s death, Rilke wrote to Ficker, after encountering the works of his late contemporary. “I have discovered much in them: overwhelmed, amazed, wondering and mystified; for one soon realizes that the conditions of these tones which rise and fall away are irrevocably singular, like those circumstances in which a dream might arise. I imagine that even one who stands close by must experience such spectacles and perceptions as though pressed, an exile, against a pane of glass: for Trakl’s life passes as if through the images of a mirror and fills its entire space, which cannot be entered, like the space of the mirror itself.” In 1917 Rilke was back, seeking again to define the mysterious aura: “For me the Trakl poem is an object of sublime existence… but now it puzzles me how its form, fleeting from the start and delicately by-passed in description, could possibly bear the weight of its own oblivion in such precise images.”

II

The complexity of Trakl's imagery is a result of a mind that, in order to continue without fragmenting entirely, must create an alternative poetic language as a bulwark against an increasingly onerous and destructive external reality. Only through this dream reconfiguration of the past, this shaping of nature into complex patterns of symbol and allusion, can the inherent absurdity of existence, and personal failure to retain spiritual authenticity in a world increasingly stripped of it, be atoned. For Trakl, hounded by his demons, there is nowhere else to go but deeper into still-darker places, to mine as if from an always depleting seam the ore of images piled on images; and the shaft he scores is impossibly constrained through the intensity of its subjectivity—there is no deviation. As Michael Hamburger attested, only a narrow furrow is ploughed, but it runs deep. Where other poets may broaden out or change radically at various mellowing or radicalizing stages of their life, Trakl's existence allows only for decline, thus he is imprisoned and propelled onwards to his own tragic finale. His poetry is, in a sense, one long poem using the same motifs endlessly reworked and reanimated in different combinations, an instinctive struggle to locate the image of final release. With such an endlessly shifting tonal palette available, is it any surprise that so many composers, from Anton Webern to Oliver Knussen to Thea Musgrave, have seized on Trakl's tortured yet lyrically profuse "songs"? One long poem, or one score of music, a visionary signature read over and again, whose content fine-tunes itself, increases in potency over a matter of months, of brief years. As the carapace of influences is shed and the drapes of the *fin de siècle* are raised, we sense the poetry evolving into something far weightier, permanent, of greater human import, more visibly itself. With Hölderlin as teacher, Trakl stretches out, taps his inner reserves, sings his despair rather than howls it. In a poem like "Night" the transformation is complete: the poet's voice is pitched at fullest freedom, anything is possible and yet there is control. With the poems of *Sebastian in Dream* and those published in *Der Brenner*, Trakl achieves greatness, and by greatness we mean absolute authenticity, the moment when image and language combine, solidifying in a perfect way. As the pain of existence and the certainty of cataclysm increase, so the tension is intensified as the form is obliged to bear even more, thus the impact on the reader is heightened.

Trakl's finest poems, then, do not belong to the first stage, but need time to emerge, through increasing suffering and experience. In 1909–11 there is an evolving memory/dream landscape with cryptic figures active within it: Joanna, Sonia, Sebastian, Elis, who graft their haunting presence onto vignettes of coarse peasants and gentle maidservants, asters blooming, children playing around rustic fountains, chestnut-shaded courtyards, and the poet's drunken forest rambles. These motifs are repetitive, monotonous, following the rhythm of those scythes which swing mournfully over the corn. But something must be added. The answer comes with the alienating paraphernalia of the metropolis—this, and the pernicious memory of the corruption of innocence, the sense of death's foot firmly in the door, stepping forcibly into life, the anxiety felt by one confronting a reality in which he senses he is superfluous and stillborn. Then the five-part poem "Helian" miraculously emerges; the freely creative dream image assumes command.

Rationally speaking, Trakl's depressions, delusions and hallucinations suggest he may have suffered from a schizophrenic illness. As the philosopher Karl Jaspers states: "One observes how schizophrenics create their own mythology, which for them exists self-evidently and unquestionably, and which often adopts this timeless quality." The shade of madness accompanies the poet through St Peter's churchyard, where "rocky loneliness is all around", on the steep paths of the Mönchsberg and by the formal ponds at Hellbrunn. The spectre of insanity and Gérard de Nerval's "black sun of melancholy" are Trakl's constant companions, and, like the assistants that plague K in Kafka's *The Castle*, they are ever present without any explanation, unable to be dispensed with and difficult to despatch. In 1914, desperate missives to Ficker show Trakl more and more concerned that he will imminently fall prey to madness. "Tell me that I must still have the strength to live and do what is true. Tell me that I am not insane. A stony darkness has broken in…"

One of the most recurring themes of Trakl's poetry is the divinity and sacredness of childhood, of what cannot be recovered, but with childhood as the threshold to the propensity for evil in maturity as the external world breaks through. The early poems, saturated with those alternately morbid or tenderly wrought scenes of rural life, lie prone to infection by the demands of adulthood. In this world of an industrialized new century he, the embalmer of a romantically envisioned, more courtly age, echoing

that for which Hölderlin mourned, has no place. Trakl's anachronistic dream-realm of shepherds, solitaries, monks and saints, wayfarers and lepers is a far cry from the whipped-cream-factory floor of culture-driven Vienna, and equally its reactive counterpart, the nerve-jangling visual experiments and time-sensitive revolutionary zeal of Expressionism, the movement he is commonly associated with. In 1913 he writes the following in a letter from Salzburg: "I long for the day when the soul neither will nor can live in this unholy body blighted by melancholy, that the soul will depart this absurd body filled with filth and decay—a body which is only an all-too-true reflection of a godless and accursed century." Trakl fused his own body with the decay he saw around him. He longed to be cleansed of the brutalities and insensitiveness, the lack of grace common to the external world, and with it his own disappointing physical form.

III

In Trakl's early works we clearly see the ghost hand of Rimbaud, not only with the delirious imagery let loose but the statement style of delivery, which recalls the *Illuminations*: "There is a stubble field where a black rain falls" ("De Profundis"); "There is a room, which they have whitewashed with milk" (Psalm). Images of hospitals, invalids, corpses and epidemics, not to mention Christian motifs, are as if lifted from the Belgian Nobel-Prize-winning writer Maurice Maeterlinck's seminal early collection of poems *Serres Chaudes* of 1889. This Maeterlinck influence has been strangely overlooked, due no doubt to the existing Belgian blind spot in European literature, but in a poem such as "Psalm" the references to both Rimbaud and Maeterlinck are equally valid. Later, Hölderlin's presence is inescapable. Trakl's voice seems to ripen—to locate, through the great Swabian Romantic, a new pietistic lyrical grandeur. The personal anguish is undimmed, but there is a new control of this dissolution, where the striking, unexpected image more persuasively bears the suffering. This eerie beauty wrought from ugly struggle is gaining all the time, like the sun on a winter's day behind a breaking

scarf of grey cloud, which, just before it goes down, miraculously floods the landscape, transforming it, remaking it with a rich, glowing light.

Reading “Helian”, Rilke was overwhelmed and sought to articulate: “It is built on its pauses, a few satisfactions about the limitless wordless: so stand the lines. Like fences in a flat land beyond which extends the unfenced in a vastness which remains unpossessed.” The same might be said of many of Trakl’s major works, such as “Limbo”, “Melancholy (II)”, “The Heart”, “Night” etc. What is left at the end, the final reckoning, is “Grodek”, Trakl’s most renowned poem, which seems to fittingly present all his poetic qualities, yet with an even stronger, more confident insistent rhythmic quality, a noble requiem. The human catastrophe has now occurred. We know what followed for Europe’s young men and this lends the poem added weight today. But this is not a war poem *per se*, a lament about industrialized war and its futility; it is a wider lament for humankind forsaken by God, the fall of man as encapsulated by the internecine war, a new world where the “heroes” are indistinguishable corpses. The notion of downfall is already rooted long before, and the Grodek battle provides a convenient scene of hell in real terms, which the poet personally witnessed. Grodek, then, is a backdrop against which Trakl can conclude his existence with a desperate upholding of truth, whilst still hoping for possible future redemption through the figure of “the unborn descendants” in the last line. Alongside the dark eagles of “Lament (II)”, “Grodek” was scrawled on the back of Trakl’s last will and testament, sent to Ficker from the Kraków hospital on 27th October 1914. These find a natural pairing with the striking message Trakl handed his publisher before boarding the train to Galicia. Ficker read: “Feelings in moments of death-like existence: all humans are worthy of love. Awakening you sense the world’s bitterness, in which resides all that unresolved guilt; your poem an imperfect atonement.”

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The core of the translations in this collection were first published by Arc Publications in 2005 as *To the Silenced: Selected Poems of Georg Trakl.* To them have been added a significant number of other works, from all stages of Trakl's creative output, many of which have rarely found their way into English. Certain poems from the Arc volume have also been amended where necessary. Following the *Selected*, which was really a gathering of the most known Trakl poems, I began to explore and research what might be added to create a more expansive volume. However, I believe the Arc volume still has a role to play since it is a bilingual edition, contains a valuable text on Trakl's presence in the Salzburg of today and also includes a number of photographs and facsimiles. In this book my intention has been to provide an all-encompassing volume of the greater part of Trakl's poetry which will equip the student and general reader with both the cornerstone of Trakl's oeuvre and the most important remaining architecture. As with any poetic legacy, not everything is necessarily worthy of inclusion. It was never my intention to create a complete Trakl in an academic sense, containing every last scrap he wrote, with prose and letters laid out in exhaustive detail. The idea of my book was to be accessible, usable and portable, hopefully reaching a more general readership who might not ordinarily come into contact with Trakl's work.

In Trakl's oeuvre there exist a significant number of variants and fragments, since he was prone to revisions and reworking. This is why some of the poems here state a numbered "version". Generally, I have included the most representative or consummate of these possible versions. I felt that to list all of them, one after another, simply because they exist was counterproductive to the flow of the collection, upsetting the balance, though of course there is certainly a case and another place for studying such a fascinating development. As regards the juvenilia, noticeably weaker poems that Trakl himself had discounted: these are not included. Trakl's limited number of extraordinary prose poems are essential to any major collection of the poetry, and in retrospect I felt

they should have been included in the Arc volume. However, the early dramatic fragments, like the juvenilia, are omitted. I have, though, included one intriguing early piece, “Desolation”, since although it is less an image-dense prose poem like “Revelation and Downfall” or “Dream and Derangement”, with echoes of Poe’s *House of Usher*, it has an aura all its own.

To summarize, the collection presents the key works in their entirety; namely *Poems*, 1913 and the posthumously published *Sebastian in Dream* of 1915. Here are found the majority of Trakl’s most known poems and a number of equally powerful, less familiar examples. The next section concerns the late poems published in the magazine *Der Brenner* in 1914–15. All these works are significant, and a few are legendary, namely “Lament (II)” and “Grodek”. This group is further enriched by the extraordinary prose poem “Revelation and Downfall”, which recounts the nocturnal journey of the solitary and constitutes a total encapsulation over two pages of Trakl’s dreamlike universe. The final part of the collection comprises a careful selection, though I stress a personal one, of the richest offerings from Trakl’s remaining oeuvre. Here, poems barely known by the English-speaking world, such as “Psalm (II)”, “Western Twilight”, “To Johanna”, “The Dark Valley” or “The Sunflowers”, self-evidently justify their inclusion as sublime expressions of Trakl’s poetic language.

Ever since I rendered “El Desdichado”, the first sonnet of Gérard de Nerval’s *Les Chimères*, into English twenty years ago I have felt that the art of literary translation is the result of a mysterious inner compulsion, a desire to properly enter the domain of the poet by making a respectful request to act as guide into a new language, to offer the most advantageous route to the frontier, or rather to repay the privilege of experiencing poems in their original language which have touched at the deepest point. It is far less a conscious decision than an inclination to move in a certain direction, as when trees bend together at the wind’s bidding. Yet always Trakl is at the forefront and I am merely his humble enabler.

Put another way, I have sought to produce, as best as I am able within the confines of a language foreign to him, an authentic poem that lives and transmits the mood and tone of Trakl’s voice, as I have interpreted it. When translating poetry, I have tried to remain alert to interior rhythms,

near-rhymes, assonance, unconscious stylistic elements that my own work may possess, rather than constructing impressive mirroring façades. Thus in the early rhymed poems I have not replicated the formal rhyme scheme, but instead have sought to compensate for its loss without resorting to conscious elaborations, which I have always felt can freeze a poem's lifeblood, even more so when too clinically successful. There will be those who disagree with this and would prefer a more formal, structurally faithful approach. I accept this but I could not feel comfortable with such a consciously regulated construction, and I therefore leave it for others better equipped to attempt it. However, Trakl's most accomplished work lies outside a formal rhyme scheme, since he abandoned those strictures when, like the Belgian poet Emile Verhaeren, whose poems I have also translated, he realized it was impinging on the potential for absolute freedom in his imagery. The alert for a rhyme can sound like a monotonous command on the brink of every line. Such poets straddling the nineteenth and twentieth centuries eventually shrank from the duty, for expressiveness demanded fluidity, an overarching tension inherent in the fast-modernizing world: the need to reflect truthfully mankind's new trajectory perhaps drove attempts for liberation.

The freedom/literalness see-saw of translation creaks on, and much has been said by those better suited than I to articulate it; but it has always been my feeling that there is an inviting strip of land one can enter whose parameters shift teasingly between the original and the translation, a kind of "all man's land" which receives the benefit of both sun and shade, safety and risk, lucidity and obscurity, freedom and fidelity. This is an elusive place, and one can drift out of it as easily as into it. But to my mind it is conscientious labouring in this narrow but potentially fertile terrain that makes the hope for a translation's perennial flowering something more than just a solitary translator's private fantasy.

WILL STONE
SUFFOLK, NOVEMBER 2018

POEMS, 1913

The Ravens

Above the black nook at noontide
Hasten the ravens, with harsh cries.
Their shadow streaks past the doe
And sometimes they are seen in surly repose.

O how they disturb the brown silence
In a field enraptured with its being,
Like a woman bewitched by a dark foreboding,
And sometimes you hear them scolding

Around a carcass, somewhere they sniff out,
Then suddenly they change course northwards
And die out like a funeral cortège
In air that quivers with lust.

The Young Maid

Dedicated to Ludwig von Ficker

I

Often by the fountain at dusk
You see her as if enchanted
Drawing water, in the dusk.
The pail rattles down, back up.

In the beeches jackdaws flutter
And she appears as if a shadow.
Her yellow hair it flutters up
and in the yard rats are shrieking.

Caressed by decay
She lowers feverish lids.
Grass withered by decay
Inclines at her feet.

II

Silence she creates in the room
And long the yard is abandoned.
In the elderberry before the room
Sad piping of a blackbird’s tune.

Silver her reflection in the mirror glass
Alien to her in the twilight glow
And wanly fades in the mirror glass
And her dread before its purity.

Dreamily a farm hand sings in darkness
And she stares, shaken by pain.
Red trickles through the darkness.
Suddenly the south wind rattles at the gate.

III

Night upon the bare pastureland
She flutters there in fever dreams.
Sullen whines the wind over the pastureland
And the moon listens from the trees.

Soon the stars around turn pale
And exhausted by grievance
Her waxen cheeks turn pale.
Putrefaction wafts from the earth.

Sorrowfully rustles the reed by the pond
And cowering she suffers the cold.
Cock crow far off. Above the pond
Morning shivers grey, unyielding.

IV

In the forge rings the hammer
And before the gate she scurries.
Glowing red the farm hand wields the hammer
She looks across as if dead.

As in a dream she is struck by laughter;
And she reels into the forge,
Crouched coyly before his laughter,
Hard and coarse like the hammer.

In the room radiate shining sparks
And with a helpless gesture

She tries to grasp the wild sparks
And in a daze drops to earth.

V

Stretched out, slender, on the bed
She awakens heavy with sweet fears
And she looks at the grubby bed
Veiled with a golden light,

The mignonettes there by the window
And the blue radiant heavens.
Sometimes the breeze wafts in the window
The timid tinkling of the bell.

Shadows slide over the pillow,
Slowly the noon hour sounds
And she breathes heavily into the pillow
And her mouth is like a wound.

VI

At evening floats the bloody linen,
Clouds above the silent woods,
That are draped in black linen.
The chatter of sparrows in the fields.

And she lies all white in darkness.
Beneath the roof a cooing wafts.
Like a carrion in bush and darkness
Flies whir about her mouth.

Dreamlike sounds in the brown hamlet
To an echo of fiddles and dances,
Her countenance drifts over the hamlet,
Her hair blows in bare branches.

Romance to Night

The lonely one beneath a tent of stars
Moves through the stillness of midnight.
The boy wakes, reeling from his dreams,
His grey face wasting into the moon.

The idiot woman with hair loose weeps
At the staring window, barred.
Lovers drift by on the pond
Their sweet journey truly a miracle.

The murderer smiles waxen into wine,
Death’s horror grasps the afflicted.
A nun prays naked and wounded
Before the crucified saviour’s anguish.

A mother sings softly in sleep.
So peacefully the child gazes into night
With eyes that are wholly truthful.
Laughter rings out from the whorehouse.

By candlelight, down in the cellar hole
With white hand the dead one paints
Smirking silence upon the walls.
The sleeper whispers still.

In Red Foliage Filled with Guitars…

In red foliage filled with guitars
The girl’s yellow hair waves
By the fence, where sunflowers rise.
Through clouds a golden cart rides.

In shadows restful, brown
The old turn silent, foolishly entwine.
Orphans sing sweetly at vespers.
Flies hum in yellow vapours.

By the brook the women still wash.
The hung-out linen floats up.
The little one I have long fallen for
Emerges again out of the dusk.

From mild skies the sparrows fall
Into green holes filled with decay.
The hungry exchanges before convalescence
A fragrance of bread and sharp spices.

Music in the Mirabell

(version 3)

A fountain sings. Clouds stand
In the clear blue, white, tender.
Thoughtful the silent people pass
Through the old garden at twilight.

The ancestral marble has turned grey.
Bird flight streaking over the vastness.
With dead eyes a faun gazes
At shadows, gliding in darkness.

Leaves fall red from the old tree
And whirl down through the open window.
In the room the light of a fire glows
And paints murky, tortured spectres.

A white stranger steps into the house.
Along decayed lanes a dog darts.
The maid puts out a lamp,
Nightly the ear hears sonata sounds.

Melancholy of Evening

—The forest that deceased broadens—
And shadows around it, like hedges.
Trembling, the deer leaves its concealment,
While the brook glides so softly

And follows old stones and ferns
And gleams silvery from woven foliage.
Soon you hear it in the black chasms—
Perhaps, that already the stars are shining.

Boundless seems the dark plain,
Scattered villages, marsh and pond,
And something feigns a fire to you.
Over the roads a cold gleam streaks.

You sense a movement in the heavens,
A host of wild birds in migration
Towards those lands, beautiful, other.
The reeds’ stirring rises and sinks.

Winter Dusk

To Max von Esterle

Black skies of metal.
Crossing in red storms at evening
Hunger-crazed crows drift
Over the parks mournful and pale.

In clouds a beam is deathly frozen;
And before Satan’s curses they wheel
Full circle and go down
Seven in number.

In festering carrion, sweet and stale,
Soundless their beaks are scything.
From mute closeness dwellings threaten;
Brightness in the auditorium.

Church, bridge and hospital
Stand harrowing in the twilight.
Blood-spattered linen swells
Sail on the canal.

Rondel

Bygone is the gold of days,
Evening’s colours brown and blue:
The gentle flutes of the shepherds have died out
Evening’s colours blue and brown
Bygone is the gold of days.

Benediction to Women

Striding amidst your women
And often with uneasiness you smile:
The anxious days have arrived.
White fades the poppy at the fence.

Like your belly so beautifully swollen,
The vine on the hill ripens golden.
Far off gleams the mirror of the pond
And the scythe clinks in the field.

The dew rolls in the bushes,
Red are the leaves drifting down.
To greet his dear wife
A Moor nears you, brown and rough.

The Beautiful City

Ancient squares in sunlit silence.
Deeply spun in blue and gold
Dreamlike hasten gentle nuns
Beneath the silence of sultry beeches.

From brown illumined churches
Death gazes in pure images,
Fine shields of great princes.
Crowns shimmer in the churches.

Horses plunge out of the fountain.
In trees blossom claws menacing.
Boys confused in dreams are playing
Gently at evening by the fountain.

Girls standing by the gates,
Look furtively on life’s colours.
Their moist lips quiver
And they linger by the gates.

Fluttering sound of chiming bells.
Marching beat and call of the guard.
On the steps strangers listen.
High in the blue organs sound.

Bright instruments sing.
Through the leafy borders of gardens
Whirs the laughter of beautiful women.
Softly the young mothers sing.

Secret breath by flowering windows
Scent of incense, tar and lilac.

Weary eyelids flicker silver
Through flowers at the windows.

In an Abandoned Room

Windows, bright flower borders,
The sound of an organ enters.
Shadows dance over wallpaper,
Confused demented whirl.

Blazing the swaying bushes
And a swarm of flies quivers.
In distant fields the scythes reap
And an ancient water sings.

What breath comes to caress me?
Swallows trace crazed signs.
Softly flows the limitless
Out there the golden forest.

Flames flicker in the borders.
The demented whirl’s mad rapture
Over the yellowing paper.
Someone is watching by the door.

Sweet fragrance of incense and pears
Glass and coffer fade in the dusk.
Slowly inclines the feverish brow
Before the white stars.

Thunderstorm Evening

Oh the red evening hours!
Sway shimmering at the open window
Tousled vine leaves tangle in blue,
Spectres of anguish nestle within.

Dust dances in the gutter stench.
The wind is jangling the panes.
A troupe of wild riders
Lightning drives glaring clouds.

Loudly cracks the pond’s mirror.
At the window frame the gulls screech
A fiery horseman gallops from the hill
And shatters in flames amongst the firs.

In the hospital the sick cry out.
Bluish whirrs the plumage of night.
Glittering with a sudden roar
Rain rushes down over the roofs.

Evening Muse

Once more to the flower window returns the steeple’s shadow
And gold. The fevered brow fades in peace and silence.
A fountain falls in the darkness of the chestnuts’ branches;
And you feel it: all is good! In the painful languishing.

The market is empty of summer’s fruits and garlands.
Peacefully the gates speak their black pageantry.
In a garden the sounds of gentle games ring out,
Where friends find each other after the meal.

Pleasantly the soul listens to the white magician’s tales.
All around the corn swishes, the scythes reap beyond noon.
With patience hard life grows silent in the huts;
The stall lantern lights the linden sleep of cows.

Drunk with breezes, lids soon lower
And softly open to the unknown signs of stars.
Endymion emerges from the darkness of oaks
And bends low over mournful waters.

Dream of Evil

Sound of a gong, dying out—
A lover awakens in black rooms
Cheek by flames that flicker at the glass.
On the river, flash rope, sail and mast.

A monk, a pregnant woman in the throng.
Guitars strum, the shimmer of scarlet gowns.
Chestnuts sultry wither in golden radiance;
Black looms the churches’ mournful pageantry.

From pale masks peers the spirit of evil.
A square darkens morbid and terrible;
Whispers well up on the islands at nightfall.

Lepers, perhaps rotting away at night
Read confused signs from bird flight.
Trembling, siblings behold each other in the park.

Spiritual Song

Signs, rare embroidery
Of a fluttering flower border.
God’s blue breath wafts
Into the garden room,
Entering joyfully.
A cross rises up in wild vines.

From the village, hear rejoicing,
The gardener scythes by the wall,
Softly an organ goes,
Stirring sound and golden glow,
Sound and glow.
Love blesses bread and wine.

Girls also come
And to the last the cock crows.
Gently a rotten trellis goes
And in rose garland and rows,
Rose rows
Maria rests, white and delicate.

A beggar there against the old stone
As if dead through his prayer,
Softly from the hill a shepherd goes
And an angel sings in the grove,
Close by in the grove
Lulls the infants to sleep.

In Autumn

The sunflowers shine by the fence
The sick sit silently in the sunlight.
In the field the labouring women sing,
And there the cloister bells chime.

The birds tell a distant fable,
And there the cloister bells chime.
Softly sounds the violin from the courtyard.
Today they tread the brown wine.

Man shows himself blithe and benign.
Today they tread the brown wine.
Wide open are the chambers of the dead
And sublimely painted by sunshine.

Towards Evening My Heart

At evening you hear the shriek of bats.
Two black horses leap in the meadow.
The red maple rustles.
To the wayfarer on the road the little tavern appears.
Wonderful to taste the nuts and new wine.
Wonderful: to lurch drunkenly through the dusking wood.
From black branches grief-stricken bells are sounding.
On your face the dew drips.

The Peasants

By the window, green and red resound.
In the smoke-blackened, low hall
The underlings and servants sit for the meal;
And they pour the wine and break the bread.

In the deep silence of noon
A meagre word occasionally falls.
On and on the fields shimmer
And the sky leaden and vast.

Hideous glow the embers in the hearth
And the swarm of flies hums.
The servants listen dull-witted and dumb
And at their temples the blood pounds.

And sometimes glances meet, lust-filled,
When a feral haze drifts through the room.
A farmhand monotonously says the prayer
And cock crow from under the door.

Again into the field. A horror often seizes
Them in the billowing roar of the corn
And back and forth, swinging, clinking
The scythes in ghostly rhythm.

All Souls

Little men, little women, sad wayfarers,
Today they scatter flowers blue and red
On their vaults so furtively bright.
Like poor dolls they are before death.

O! How full of fear and humility they seem,
Like shades stood behind black bushes.
In the autumn wind the weeping lament of the unborn,
And you see the lights go astray.

The sighs of lovers waft through the branches
And over there the mother decays with the child.
Unreal seems the roundelay of the living
Strangely scattered on the evening wind.

Their life is so confused, heavy with dull afflictions.
Have pity God on the hell and agony of the women,
And these lamentations of death without hope.
The lonely roam silently in halls of stars.

Melancholy

(version 3)

Bluish shadows. O you dark eyes,
That, gliding past, long behold me.
Guitar sounds gently escort autumn
In the garden, leached into brown lees.
Death’s grave sombreness is prepared
With nymph hands, at red breasts suckle
Mouldered lips and in black lees
The sun-youth’s moist locks glide.

Soul of Life

Decay, that softly darkens the leafage,
Its vast silence dwells in the forest.
Soon a village seems to spectrally incline.
The sister’s mouth whispers in black branches.

The lonely one will soon slip away,
Perhaps a shepherd on dark pathways.
A beast steps softly from the arcade of trees,
While the lids lift open to divinity.

Beautifully the blue river flows down,
At evening clouds reveal themselves;
The soul too in seraphic silence.
Ephemeral forms go under.

Transfigured Autumn

Prodigiously ends the year
With golden wine and garden fruits.
Wonderful silence of surrounding woods
Companions they are to the solitary.

So the peasant says: it is good.
You evening bells long and faint
Still grant us cheerful courage at the end.
A migration of birds greets us on the journey.

It is the mellow season of love.
In a boat down the blue river
How beautiful image upon image—
That sinks down in rest and silence.

Forest Nook

To Karl Minnich

Brown chestnuts. Gently drift the old folk
Into evening’s stillness; tenderly the beautiful leaves fade.
In the churchyard the blackbird jests with the dead cousin,
The fair-haired tutor is escort to Angela.

Pure images of death watch from church windows;
But a bloody plot seems more mournful and sombre.
Today the gate stayed locked. The sexton has the key.
In the garden the sister talks amicably to ghosts.

In old cellars the wine ripens golden, clear.
Sweet scent of apples. Not far distant, jubilance gleams.
On long evenings the children love hearing fairy tales;
Gold, often truth comes out of gentle madness.

The blue brims with mignonettes; candlelight in rooms.
The humble have their place made ready.
Along the forest edge glides a lonely destiny;
Night appears, angel of repose, upon the threshold.

In Winter

The field shines white and cold.
The sky is lonely and vast.
Jackdaws circle above the pond
And the hunter steps down from the wood.

In black treetops a silence lives.
Light of a fire darts from the huts.
Sometimes sleigh bells sound far off
And the grey moon slowly emerges.

Game bleeds gently on the border
And ravens splash in bloody gutters.
Reeds quiver yellow and rise up.
Frost, smoke, a step in the empty copse.

In an Old Album

Always you return, melancholy,
Oh meekness of the lonely soul.
To the end a golden day glows.

With humility the patient one bows before pain
Resounding with melodies and tender madness.
See! It is already dusk.

Again night comes in and a mortal laments
And with it another suffers.

Trembling beneath autumn stars
Yearly the head bows deeper.

Metamorphosis

(version 2)

Along gardens, autumnal, seared red:
Here in stillness is revealed a vigorous life.
The hands of the man bear brown vines,
Whilst in his gaze a gentle pain declines.

At evening: steps pass through black country
Appearing in the silence of red beeches.
A blue animal seeks to incline before death
And grimly an empty garment moulders.

Calmness plays before a tavern,
A countenance is sunk drunkenly in the grass.
Fruits of the elder, flutes mellow and intoxicated,
Washing around woman, scent of mignonettes.

Little Concert

A red, that dreamlike unsettles you—
Through your hands the sun shines.
You feel your heart mad with rapture
Prepare an act in silence.

At noon the flowing of yellow fields.
Barely you still hear the crickets' song,
The rough swinging of the scythes.
Guileless silent, golden forests.

In the green pond corruption glows.
The fish are quite still. God's breath
Gently wakens string play in the vapour.
The waters gesture recovery to the leper.

Dedalus' spirit glides in blue shadows,
An odour of milk in the twigs of the hazel.
Long still you hear the teacher at the violin,
In the empty courtyard the shriek of rats.

In the pitcher by wretched wallpaper
Blossom the cooler colours of violets.
In strife dark voices die out,
Narcissus in the final chord of flutes.

Mankind

Mankind posed before the fire chasms,
Dark brows of warriors, a roll of drums,
Footsteps in blood fog; black irons sound,
Despair, night spent in the dejected brain:
Eve’s shadow comes, the hunt and red coins.
Cloud through which light breaks the last supper.
A gentle silence dwells in bread and wine
And those twelve in number gathered there.
Nightly beneath olive trees they cry out in sleep;
Saint Thomas dips his hand into the wound.

The Walk

I

Afternoon music murmurs in the grove.
In the corn the stern scarecrows turn.
The elder bushes drift off gently by the road;
A house shimmers strange and vague.

In gold hovers the scent of thyme,
On a stone you read a genial sign.
On a pasture children play ball,
Then a tree begins to circle before you.

You dream: the sister combs her blonde tresses,
A friend far distant writes you a letter.
Through grey a rick flies yellowed and crooked
And sometimes you float light and splendid.

II

Time flows. O sweet Helios!
O reflection in the toad pond so sweet and clear;
Into sand gloriously sinks an Eden.
A bush holds the bunting to its breast.

A brother perishes in a cursed land
And your steel eyes are watching him.
In gold there a scent of thyme.
By the hamlet a boy lays a fire.

The lovers glow anew in butterflies
And joyously sway around stone and sign.

Crows flutter up around a foul repast
And your brow rages through soft green.

In the thorn bush a deer softly dies.
A bright day of childhood accompanies you,
Flighty and vague the grey wind
Swills decaying odours through the dusk.

III

An old lullaby causes you anguish.
At the wayside a woman piously feeds her child.
Somnolent, you hear the welling up of her spring.
Through apple-tree branches falls a holy sound.

And bread and wine are sweet after hard labour.
Through fruits your hand gropes silver.
The dead Rachel moves through the fields.
And the green beckons with friendly gestures.

Also blessed the poor maids' blooming breast,
Who stand, in reverie at the old fountain.
Contented, the solitaries go on peaceful paths
With God's sinless creatures.

De Profundis

There is a stubble field, where a black rain falls.
There is a brown tree here, which stands alone.
There is a hissing wind that wreathes the empty huts.
How sorrowful this evening.

Beyond the hamlet
The gentle orphan still gathers in the meagre corn.
Round and golden, her eyes graze in the twilight
And her womb awaits the heavenly bridegroom.

Returning home
Shepherds found the sweet remains
Decayed in the thorn bush.

A shadow I am far from darkened villages.
God’s silence
I drank from the spring in the grove.

Onto my brow cold metal steps
Spiders seek my heart.
There is a light that dies in my mouth.

At night I found myself upon a heath,
Thick with filth and stardust.
In the hazel bush
Crystal angels have chimed again.

Trumpets

Beneath trimmed willows, where brown children play
And leaves drift, trumpets sound. Graveyard shudder.
Banners of scarlet plunge through the maple’s grief
Riders along rye fields, desolate mills.

Or shepherds sing at night and stags step
Into the circle of their fire, the grove’s ancient sorrow,
Dancers rise up from a black wall;
Banners of scarlet, laughter, madness, trumpets.

Dusk

In the courtyard, bewitched by twilight’s milky glow,
Through autumn’s browning, gentle invalids glide.
Their waxen-rounded gaze ponders a golden age,
Filled with dreaming, peace and wine.

Their wasting-away spectrally encloses them.
The stars scatter white sorrow.
In the grey filled with delusion and bell chimes,
See, how the horror-stricken are scattered in confusion.

Distorted shapes of ridicule scurry, cowering
Fluttering upon fields black with crosses.
O! Mournful shadows upon walls.

Others flee through darkening arcades;
And at night plunge from the red shuddering
Of stellar winds like raving maenads.

Smiling Spring

(version 2)

I

Beside the brook, that flows through the yellow fallow field,
The dried reed of last year still stirs.
Sounds glide wonderfully through greyness,
The waft of warm muck drifts by.

From willows catkins hang peacefully in the wind,
Melancholy song a dreaming soldier sings.
A strip of meadow swishes, blown about and sorrowful,
A child stands in silhouette tender and gentle.

The birches there, the black thorn bush,
Also forms flee in smoke dissolving.
Brightly green blooms and one more decays
And toads slept amongst the young leeks.

II

I love you ardently coarse washerwoman,
Still the flood bears the sky’s golden burden.
A little fish flashes past and fades;
A waxen face flows through the elders.

In gardens bells sink long and muted
A little bird trills as if insane.
The gentle corn swells silent and rapt
And bees gather still in earnest industry.

Come now love to the weary labourer!
Into his hut a mild beam falls.
The forest streams through evening sour and sallow
Now and then buds cheerfully crackle.

III

How all that comes into being seems so sick!
A breath of fever encircles a hamlet;
Yet from branches beckons a gentle spirit
And opens the heart wide and fearful.

An outpour of blooming so quietly trickles away
And the unborn fosters his own repose.
The lovers bloom towards their stars
And sweeter flows their breath on the night.

So bitter good and true is, what lives;
And softly an old stone grazes you:
Truly! I will always be with you.
O mouth! that quivers through the white willow.

Suburb in the Föhn

At evening the place is desolate and brown,
The air heavy with a greyish foul stench.
Thunder of a train from the arch of a bridge—
And sparrows flutter over bush and fence.

Huddles of huts, paths scattering wildly,
In gardens confusion and movement,
Sometimes out of this dull stirring rises a howl,
In a band of children a red dress flies.

A rat choir whistles amorously by the swill.
In baskets the women bear the entrails,
Rank procession of squalor and filth,
They emerge out of the dusk.

Suddenly a sewer spews fatty blood
From the abbatoir into the calm river.
To the sparse shrubs the Föhn lends colour
And slowly red creeps through the flood.

A whisper, that drowns in troubled sleep.
Figures loom above the dykes,
Perhaps memories of a former life,
That on warm breezes rise and fall.

From clouds plunge shimmering avenues,
Filled with fine coaches and bold riders.
Then you see too a ship founder on rocks
And sometimes rose-coloured mosques.

The Rats

In the courtyard the autumn moon shines white.
From the roof’s edge grotesque shadows fall.
A silence dwells in empty windows;
Where softly the rats rush upwards

And, whistling, scurry here and there
And a greyish whiff of haze wafts
After them from the privy, through which
The moonlight quivers spectrally.

And insatiably they squabble as if insane
Crowding into house and barns,
Swollen with fruit and grain.
In the darkness icy winds complain.

Dejection

World calamity ghosts through afternoon.
Huts flee through little gardens brown and forlorn.
Cinders dance around burnt manure,
Two sleepers stagger homewards, grey and obscure.

On the withered pasture a child runs
And plays with his eyes black and smooth.
Gold drips from bushes sombre and bleak.
An old man turns sadly in the wind.

At evening once more above my head
Saturn mutely steers a wretched fate.
A tree, a dog steps back on itself
And God’s heaven sways black and defoliated.

A little fish glides swiftly down the stream;
And softly stirs the dead friend’s hand
And lovingly smoothes brow and garment.
A light summons shadows in rooms to awaken.

Whispered in the Afternoon

Sun, autumnal tenuous and shy,
And the fruit drops from the trees.
In blue rooms silence dwells
A drawn-out afternoon.

The dying sound of metal;
And a white beast breaks down.
Coarse songs of brown girls
Have blown away in falling leaves.

The brow dreams God’s colours,
Senses the soft wings of madness.
Shadows turn on the hill
Blackly bordered by decay.

Twilight filled with rest and wine;
Mournful guitars flow.
And to the mellow lamp within
You turn as in a dream.

Psalm

For Karl Kraus

There is a light, which the wind has extinguished.
There is an inn on the heath, which a drunk abandons in the afternoon.
There is a vineyard, black and burnt with holes full of spiders.
There is a room, which they have whitewashed with milk.
The madman has perished. There is an island of the South Sea,
To receive the sun god. Drums are beaten.
The men lead warlike dances.
The women hip-sway in creepers and fire-flowers,
When the sea sings. O our lost paradise.

The nymphs have left the golden forests.
The stranger is buried. Then a shimmering rain arises.
The son of Pan appears as an earth-worker,
Who sleeps through noon against the glowing asphalt.
There are little girls in a courtyard in tiny frocks full of heart-rending want.
There are rooms filled with accords and sonatas.
There are shadows which embrace before a blind mirror.
At the windows of hospitals convalescents warm themselves.
A white steamer carries the bloody epidemic along the canal.

The strange sister again appears in someone’s evil dreams.
Resting in the hazel bush, she plays with his stars.
The student, perhaps a double, follows her from the window for a long time.
Behind him stands his dead brother, or else he descends the old spiral staircase.
In darkness brown chestnut trees make pallid the figure of the young novice.
The garden is in evening. Bats flutter about the cloister.

The caretaker’s children surrender play and seek the gold of heaven.
Final chord of a quartet. The little blind girl runs trembling along the avenue,
And later her shadow gropes its way along cold walls, surrounded by fairy tales and holy legends.

There is an empty boat, which drifts down the black canal at evening.
In the gloom of the old asylum human ruins decay.
The dead orphans lie by the garden wall.
From grey rooms step angels with shit-spattered wings.
Worms drip from their yellowed lids.
The square before the church is dark and silent, as in the days of childhood.
On silver soles former lives glide by
And the shadows of the damned decline towards sighing waters.
In his grave the white magician plays with his snakes.

Silently above the place of skulls God’s golden eyes are opening.

Rosary Songs

TO THE SISTER

Where you go becomes autumn and evening,
Blue deer, that sounds under trees,
Lonely pond at evening.

Quietly sounds the flight of birds,
Melancholy above the arches of your eyes.
Your narrow smile sounds.

God has curved your eyelids.
At night the stars seek, Good Friday's child,
The arch of your brow.

NEARNESS OF DEATH

(version 2)

O the evening, that enters the dark hamlets of childhood.
The pond beneath the willows
Fills with the blighted sighs of melancholy.

O the forest, which softly lowers brown eyes,
As from the lonely one's bony hands
The crimson of his rapturous days sinks down.

O the nearness of death. Let us pray.
In this night on warm cushions
Yellowed with incense the frail limbs of lovers break free.

AMEN

Rot gliding through the decayed room;
Shadows on yellow wallpaper; in dark mirrors
The ivory sorrow of our hands is arched.

Brown beads trickle through dead fingers.
In the stillness
An angel’s opiate eyes of blue.

Blue also is the evening;
The hour of our demise, Azrael’s shadow,
Darkening a little brown garden.

Decay

(version 2)

At evening, when the bells chime peace,
I follow the marvellous flight of birds,
That in long multitudes, like processions of pious pilgrims,
Vanish into the clear vastness of autumn.

Wandering through the dusk-filled garden,
I dream towards their brighter destinies
And scarcely sense the hour hand’s motion.
Thus I follow their journey over the clouds.

Then a waft of decay has me shudder.
The blackbird laments in leafless branches.
The red wine sways on rusty trellises.

As like the death roundelay of pale children
Around dark, weathered fountain edges,
Trembling blue asters bow in the wind.

In the Homeland

Mignonette scent strays through the sick window;
An old square, chestnut trees black and desolate.
A golden beam breaks through the roof and flows
Over the siblings, dreamlike and confused.

Decay drifts in the dishwater, gently coos
The Föhn through the brown garden; very still
The sunflower savours its gold and melts away.
Through blue air clangs the call of the guard.

Mignonette scent. The walls dusk bleakly.
The sister’s sleep is heavy. The night wind burrows
Through her hair bathed in lunar brilliance.

The cat’s shadow glides blue and slender
From the ramshackle roof that borders near affliction,
The candle flame that rises crimson.

An Autumn Evening

To Karl Röck

The brown village. A darkness is often reflected
Striding along walls that stand in autumn,
Figures: man and woman, the dead pass
Into cool rooms to make ready their bed.

Here boys play. Heavy shadows broaden
Over brown manure. Maidservants walk
Through moist blueness and sometimes they search
Out of eyes filled with night-chimes.

For the solitary there is a tavern;
That waits patiently beneath dark arches,
Where golden tobacco clouds drift.

Yet always the self is dark and near.
The drunk muses in the shadow of old arches
On wild birds drawn into the distance.

Human Wretchedness

(version 2)

The clock, which strikes five before the sun—
A dark horror grips the lonely ones,
In the evening garden bleak trees swish.
The dead one’s face stirs at the window.

Perhaps, this hour stands still.
Before dulled eyes blue images juggle
To the rhythm of ships that sway on the river.
On the quay, a train of nuns drifts past.

In the hazel bush girls play pale and blind,
Like lovers, who in sleep entwine.
Perhaps there are flies singing about a carrion there,
Perhaps in mother’s lap an infant also sobs.

From hands sink asters blue and red,
The youth’s mouth slips away strange and wise;
And eyelids flutter unsettled with angst and quiet;
Through fever blackness wafts an aroma of bread.

It seems, you hear also hideous shrieking;
Through decayed wall bones glimmer.
An evil heart laughs loudly in beautiful rooms;
A dog darts past a dreamer.

An empty casket is lost in the darkness.
A room seeks to light up for the murderer,
While by night lanterns are smashed in the storm.
Laurel graces the noble one’s white temple.

In the Village

I

From brown walls a village, a field steps.
A shepherd decays upon an old stone.
Formed of blue animals is the forest edge,
The soft leaves that fall in stillness.

The peasants' brows all brown, long sounds
The evening bell; beauty in pious customs,
The saviour's black head in the thorn bush,
The cool room that death reconciles.

How pale the mothers are. Blue sinks
On glass and chest, the pride their mind preserves;
Also a white head inclines high aged
Over the grandchild who drinks milk and stars.

II

The poor one, who lonely in spirit passed on,
Rises waxen over an old path.
The apple trees sink down stark and calm
Into the colours of their fruit that blackly corrupts.

Still the roof of dried straw arches
Over the slumber of cows. The blind maidservant
Appears in the yard; a blue water laments;
The skull of a horse stares from the rotten gate.

With dark soul the imbecile speaks a word
Of love, which dies out in the black bush,

Where the other stands as a tender dream form.
In moister blue the evening resounds.

III

At the window tap branches stripped by the Föhn.
A savage aching grows in the peasant woman’s womb.
Through her arms trickles black snow;
Golden-eyed owls flutter about her head.

The walls stare bleak and caked with filth
In cool darkness. In the fever bed
The pregnant belly goes cold, ogled brazenly by the moon.
A dog has breathed its last before her room.

Three men step darkly through the gate
With scythes, broken in the field.
The red evening wind rattles through the window;
From which steps a black angel.

Song of Evening

At evening, when we take the dark paths,
Before us our pale forms appear.

When we thirst,
We drink the white water of the pond,
The sweetness of our sorrow-filled childhood.

Faded away, we rest beneath elder bushes,
Gaze at grey gulls.

Springtime clouds rise over the dark city,
That silences the nobler time of monks.

When I took your slender hands
Softly you opened round eyes,
Long ago.

But when the dark melody haunts my soul,
You appear white in the landscape of autumn.

Three Glances into an Opal

To Erhard Buschbeck

I

Glance into an opal: a village wreathed in withered vines,
Stillness of grey clouds, yellow rocky mounds
And coolness of evening springs: twin mirrors
Framed by shadows and slimy stones.

Autumn paths and crosses settle into evening,
Singing pilgrims and blood-stained linen.
Thus the figure of the solitary turns inwards
And travels, a pale angel through the deserted grove.

From blackness blows the Föhn. With satyrs
The slender young women unite; monks, pale, lustful priests,
Their madness embellished with dark and lovely lilies
And hands lift to the golden shrine of God.

II

Rosy a dewdrop hangs, moistening
The Rosemary: a stench of graves leaks away,
Hospitals, swollen with the insanity of fever moans and curses.
From the grey and mouldered family vault a skeleton ascends.

In blue haze and slime the old man’s wife dances,
Her filth-stiffened hair brimming with black tears,
Boys dream wildly amidst barren willow fronds
Their brows bare and raw with leprosy.

Through the arched window evening settles balmy and mild.
A saint steps from his wounds' black scars.
Crimson snails crawl from broken shells
And spurt blood into stiffened grey thorn snarls.

III

The blind strew incense into festering wounds.
Red-golden gowns; torchlight, singing of psalms;
And girls who embrace the Lord's body like poison.
Figures stride wax-stiffened through embers and smoke.

A dry-boned fool leads the lepers in a midnight dance
Gardens of outlandish adventure;
Distortions; grotesque flower faces, laughter, ogres
And rolling stars in black thorny briars.

O poverty, beggars' broth, bread and sweet leek;
Life's daydream in a hut at the forest edge.
Grey hardens the sky above the yellow fields
And, according to custom, the evening bells sing out.

Night Song

Breath unmoved. An animal’s face
Stiffens before blue, its holiness.
Mighty is the silence in stone;

Mask of a night bird. Soft triad
Dies away into one. Elai! Your countenance
Bows speechless over bluish waters.

O! you silent mirrors of truth.
On the elfin-boned temple of the lonely one
Appears the reflection of fallen angels.

Helian

I

In the solitary hours of the spirit
Beautiful it is to walk in the sun,
By the yellow walls of summer.
Quietly our footsteps ring in the grass; but always
The son of Pan sleeps in the grey marble.

Evenings on the terrace drunk we were on brown wine.
Reddish glows the peach in the leaves;
Soft sonata, cheerful laughter.

Beautiful is the stillness of night.
On the dark plain
We meet ourselves with shepherds and white stars.

When autumn comes
A sober clarity enters the grove.
Soothed, we wander beside red walls
And round eyes follow the flight of birds.
At evening white water sinks down in the funeral urns.

In bare branches heaven rejoices.
In pure hands the countryman bears bread and wine
And peacefully ripens the fruit in the sunny pantry.

O how earnest is the countenance of the dear deceased.
Yet the soul delights in righteous contemplation.

II

Immense is the silence of the ruined garden,
When the young novice wreathes his brow with brown leaves,
His breath drinks icy gold.

Hands stir the age of bluish waters
Or in cold night the white cheeks of the sisters.

Soft and harmonious is a walk past friendly rooms,
Where solitude is and the rustle of the maple,
Where perhaps the thrush still sings.

Beautiful is man and emerging in darkness,
When marvelling he moves his limbs,
And his eyes roll silently in crimson hollows.

At vespers the stranger is lost to black November destruction,
Beneath rotting boughs, by walls filled with leprosy,
Where the holy brother earlier walked,
Lost in the soft string play of his madness,

O how lonely dies the evening wind.
Dying away, the head bows down in the olive tree’s darkness.

III

Harrowing is the downfall of the race.
At this hour the eyes of the beholder
Fill with the gold of his stars.

At evening sinks the dying bell, that chimes no more,
The decay of black walls along the square,
The dead soldier calls to prayer.

A pale angel
The son steps into the empty house of his Fathers.

The sisters have gone far away to white old men.

At night the sleeper found them beneath the pillars in the hallway,
Returned from mournful pilgrimages.

O how their hair stiffens with muck and worms,
As with silver feet he stands there,
And, deceased, they step from bare rooms.

O you psalms in fiery midnight rains,
When with nettles the servants scourged the gentle eyes,
The childlike fruits of the elder
Incline astonished over an empty grave.

Softly rolls the yellowed moon
Above the young man’s fever sheets,
Before the silence of winter comes.

IV

An exalted destiny muses down Kidron,
Where the cedar, a gentle creature,
Unfolds beneath the blue brow of the father,
A shepherd leads his flock over the meadow at night.
Or there are cries in sleep,
When in the grove a brazen angel confronts man,
The flesh of the saint melts on the glowing grill.

Round huts of clay the purple vines entwine,
Sheaves of yellowed corn resounding,
The hum of bees, the flight of cranes.
At evening on rocky paths the resurrected meet.

In black waters the lepers are mirrored;
Or they part their muck-spattered robes
Weeping to the balsam wind that wafts down from the rosy hill.

Through the alleys of night grope slender servant girls,
To seek the loving shepherd.

On Saturdays gentle singing comes from the huts.

May the song also remember the boy,
His insanity, and white temples, his departing,
The decayed, who bluishly opens eyes.
O how grief-stricken is this reunion.

V

Steps of madness in black rooms,
Shadows of old men under the open door,
When Helian’s soul regards itself in the rosy mirror
And from his brow snow and leprosy fall.
On walls the stars have died out
And the white forms of light.

From carpets rise the bones of graves,
On the hill the silence of crosses decayed,
Incense sweetness on the crimson night wind.

O you shattered eyes in black mouths,
When the grandson in gentle derangement
Muses alone on the darker ending,
The silent god lowers blue eyelids over him.

SEBASTIAN IN DREAM, 1915

SEBASTIAN IN DREAM

Childhood

The elder bush heavy with fruit; calmly childhood dwelt
In a blue cave. Over the timeworn path,
Where brown now the wild grass sighs,
Silent branches muse; the rustle of leaves

As when blue water sounds in the rock.
Gentle is the blackbird’s lament. Speechless, a shepherd
Follows the sun that rolls from the autumn hill.

A blue moment is only more soul.
A shy deer appears at the forest’s edge, and peacefully
Rest the old bells and dark hamlets in the depths.

More pious, you know the meaning of the dark years,
Coolness and autumn in lonely rooms;
And shining steps ring out in holy blueness.

Softly rattles an open window, tears come
At the sight of the decayed churchyard on the hill,
Memories of legends retold; but sometimes the soul brightens,
When it thinks of merry people, days of spring dark-gold.

Song of Hours

With dark glances the lovers gaze on each other,
The blond, the radiant. In glaring gloom
Their yearning arms delicately entwine.

Crimson broke the blessed one’s mouth. Round eyes
Mirror the dark-gold of the spring afternoon,
Border and blackness of the forest, evening angst in the green;
Perhaps unutterable flight of birds, the unborn’s
Path by darkened villages, lonely summers
And sometimes out of decayed blueness a dead one steps.

Softly the yellow corn rustles in the field.
Hard is life and steely the countryman swings the scythe,
The carpenter joins the mighty beams.

Crimson turn the leaves in autumn; the monastic soul
Wanders through joyful days; ripe is the grape
And festive the air in the great open farmyards.
Sweeter the scent of yellowed fruit; soft is the laughter
Of the joyful, music and dance in the cellars’ shadow;
In the dusking garden step and silence of the dead boy.

On the Way

At evening they carried the stranger to the chamber of the dead;
An odour of tar; the red plane tree’s soft rustling;
Dark flight of jackdaws, a guard draws up in the square.
The sun has sunk into black linen; ever this bygone evening returns.
In the next room the sister plays a Schubert sonata.
So softly sinks her smile into the decayed fountain,
Which in the twilight rustles blue. O how old is our lineage.
Someone whispers below in the garden; someone has departed this black heaven.
From the dresser, scent of apples. Grandmother lights the golden candles.

Oh, how mild is autumn. Softly our footsteps ring out in the old park
Beneath high trees. O, how sober is the hyacinthine face of twilight.
The blue spring at your feet, mysterious your mouth’s red silence,
Made sombre by the leaves’ slumber, dark-gold of decayed sunflowers.
Your lids are heavy with poppy and dream softly against my brow.
Gentle bells quiver in the breast. A blue cloud
Your face has sunk over me in the twilight.

A song for guitar rings out from an unknown tavern,
The wild elder bushes there, a long bygone November day,
Familiar steps on the dusking stairway, the sight of beams turned brown,
An open window, at which a sweet hope lingered—
Unutterable it all is, O God one falls to one’s knees overwhelmed.

Oh, how dark is this night. A crimson flame
Died at my mouth. In the stillness
The anxious soul’s lonely string music dies away.
Leave be, when drunk with wine the head sinks into the gutter.

Landscape

(version 2)

September evening; sorrowfully sound the dark calls of shepherds
Through the village at dusk; fire sparks in the forge.
Mightily a black horse rears up; the hyacinthine locks of the maid
Snatch after the fervour of its crimson nostrils.
Softly stiffens at the forest edge the cry of the hind
And the yellow blooms of autumn
Bow speechless over the pond’s blue countenance.
In red flame a tree burned, the bats’ dark faces flutter up.

To the Boy Elis

Elis, when the blackbird calls in the black wood,
This is your decline.
Your lips drink the coolness of the blue rock spring.

Leave be, when quietly your brow bleeds
Bygone legends
And the dark interpretation of bird flight.

But you walk with soft steps into the night,
Which hangs heavy with purple grapes
And move your arms more beautifully in the blue.

A thorn bush sounds,
Where your moon eyes are.
O, how long, Elis, have you been dead.

Your body is a hyacinth,
Into which a monk dips his waxen fingers.
A black cavern is our silence,

From which at times a gentle animal steps
And slowly lowers heavy lids.
On your temples black dew drips,

The final gold of failed stars.

Elis

I

Perfect is the stillness of this golden day.
Under ancient oaks
You appear, Elis, a restful one with round eyes.

Their blueness mirrors the slumber of lovers.
Upon your mouth
Their rosy sighs died out.

At evening the fisherman hauled in his heavy nets.
A good shepherd
Leads his flock by the forest edge.
Oh how righteous, Elis, are all your days.

Softly sinks
On bare walls the olive tree’s blue stillness,
An old man’s dark song died away.

A golden boat
Sways, Elis, your heart against a lonely sky.

II

In Elis’ breast a gentle bell chime sounds
At evening,
When his head sinks down upon the black pillow.

A blue deer
Bleeds softly in the thorny thicket.

A brown tree stands apart there;
Its blue fruits have fallen.

Symbols and stars
Sink softly in the evening pond.

Behind the hill winter has come.

Blue doves
Nightly drink the icy sweat
That runs from Elis’ crystal brow.

Forever
On black walls God’s lonely wind resounds.

Hohenburg

(version 2)

No one in the house. Autumn in rooms;
Moon-bright sonata
And awakening at dusk by the forest edge.

Always you ponder the white countenance of man
Far from the turmoil of time;
Over a dreaming form, green branches bow willingly,

Cross and evening
With crimson arms the resounding one is enfolded by his star,
Which rises to windows unlived in.

Thus the stranger trembles in darkness,
As he softly raises lids over a human form,
Distant, the wind’s silver voice in the hall.

Sebastian in Dream

For Adolf Loos

Mother bore the babe in the white moon,
In the walnut's shadow, the ancient elder,
Drunk on poppy sap, the lament of the thrush;
And silently
In sympathy a bearded face bowed over her

Quiet in the dark of windows; and old household tools
Of the fathers
Lay mouldering; love and autumnal reverie.

Dark too was the day of the year, mournful childhood,
When softly the boy descended to cool waters, silver fishes,
Calm and countenance;
When stonily he launched himself before black horses raving,
In the grey night his star rose over him;

Or holding the icy hand of his mother at evening
He passed through St Peter's autumn churchyard,
A delicate corpse lay still in the darkness of the chamber
And the other raised cold lids over him.

But he was a little bird in bare branches,
Into November evening long the bell sounded,
The Father's stillness, when in sleep he descended the darkening spiral stair.

II

Peace of the soul. Lonely winter evening,

The dark shapes of shepherds by the ancient pond;
Infant in the hut of straw; O how softly
Into black fever his face sank down.
Holy night.

Or, holding the father's hard hand, in silence
He ascended dark Calvary.
And in shadowy rock niches
The blue form of man passed through his legend,
From the wound beneath his heart the crimson blood flowed out.
O how softly rose the cross in the darkness of his soul.

Love; when in black corners the snow melted,
Cheerfully a blue breeze caught in the ancient elder,
In the walnut's vault of shadow;
And gently to the boy appeared his rosy angel.

Joy; when in cool rooms an evening sonata sang out,
From brown beams of wood
A blue moth crept from its silver chrysalis.

O the nearness of death. From stony walls
A yellow head bowed down, silent the child,
As in that March the moon decayed.

III

Rosy Easter bell in the burial vault of night
And the silver voices of the stars,
As in shudders, a sombre madness sank from the sleeper's brow.

O such calm a stroll down the blue river
Musing on that forgotten, when from verdant boughs
The thrush calls a stranger into decline.

Or in the bony hand of the old man
He went at evening to the decayed city walls

And in a black coat the other bore a rosy babe,
In the walnut’s shadow the spirit of evil appeared.

Groping over the green steps of summer. O how softly
The garden decayed into brown autumn stillness,
Fragrance and melancholy of the ancient elder
When in Sebastian’s shadow the silver voice of the angel died.

On the Moor

(version 3)

Wayfarer in black wind; softly whispers the withered reed
In the stillness of the moor. Against grey skies
A flight of wild fowl passes;
Cross-wise over dark waters.

Pandemonium. In a derelict hut
On black wings, putrefaction flutters up;
Crippled birches sigh in the wind.

Evening in the deserted inn. The gentle melancholy
Of grazing herds enshrouds the way home,
Apparition of night: toads dive from silvery waters.

In Spring

Softly snow sank from dark steps,
In the shade of trees
Lovers lift rosy lids.

Ever the dark calls of the mariner followed by
Star and night;
And softly the oars beat time.

Soon by the decayed wall bloom
Violets,
So calmly greens the temple of the lonely one.

Evening in Lans

(version 2)

Wayfaring through twilit summer
Past sheaves of yellowed corn. Beneath white-washed arches,
Where the swallow flew out and in, we drank the fiery wine.

Beautiful: O melancholy and crimson laughter.
Evening and the dark scents of the green
Our glowing brows cooled with showers.

Over the forest steps silver waters trickle,
Night and speechless a forgotten life.
Friend; leafy footbridges into the village.

On the Mönchsberg

(version 2)

Where in the shadow of autumn elms the decayed path sinks down,
Far from the huts of leaf, sleeping shepherds,
Always the dark form of coolness follows the wayfarer

Over the bridge of bone, the hyacinth voice of the boy,
Softly chanting the forgotten legend of the forests,
And more gently, a sick thing now, the brother’s wild lament.

So a touch of green stirs the knee of the stranger,
The stony head;
Nearer the blue spring murmurs the women’s lament.

Kaspar Hauser Song

To Bessie Loos

Truly he loved the sun, as crimson it sank behind the hill,
The woodland paths, the blackbird singing
The joy of the green.

Earnest was his dwelling in the tree’s shadow
And pure his countenance.
Into his hand God spoke a gentle flame:
O man!

Silently his footfall found the city at evening;
The dark lament of his mouth:
I want to be a horseman.

But bush and beast shadowed him,
House and dusking garden of white men
And his murderer stalked him.

Spring and summer and beautiful the autumn
Of the righteous one, his soft step
Passing the dark rooms of dreamers.
At night he remained alone with his star;

Saw snow falling through bare branches
And in the gloomy passage the murderer’s shadow.

Silver sank the head of the unborn.

By Night

The blueness of my eyes has died out in this night,
The red gold of my heart. O how calmly burned the light.
Your blue cloak enshrouded the sinking one;
Your red mouth sealed the friend’s derangement.

Transformation of Evil

(version 2)

Autumn: black striding at the forest's edge; minute of silent destruction; beneath the bare tree the leper's brow hearkens. Long bygone evening, sinking now over mossy steps; November. A bell chimes and the shepherd leads a herd of horses black and red into the village. Beneath hazel bushes the green hunter guts the game. His hands smoked with blood and the beast's shadow sighs in the foliage above the eyes of the man, brown and taciturn; the forest. Crows that scatter, three. Their flight is like a sonata, replete with fading chords and manly melancholy; softly a golden cloud dissolves. By the mill boys are lighting a fire. Flame is brother to the palest and the other laughs buried in his crimson hair; or it is a place of murder, past which a stony path weaves. The barberries have vanished, year-long it dreams in leaden air beneath the firs; fear, green darkness, the gurgling of a drowning man: out of the starry pond the fisherman draws a huge, black fish, face filled with cruelty and insanity. The voices of the reeds, of quarrelling men behind, the other in a red boat rocks upon autumn waters, dwelling in dark legends of his race and stony eyes opened over nights and virginal terrors. Evil.

What made you stand so still on the decayed stair in the house of your ancestors? Leaden blackness. What do you raise to your eyes with silver hand; and the lids sink down as if drunk with poppy? But through the wall of stone you see the sky of stars, the Milky Way, Saturn; red. Raving, the bare tree knocks against the wall of stone. You on decayed steps: tree, star, stone! You, a blue animal that gently quivers; you, the pale priest who sacrifices it upon the black altar. O your smile in darkness, sad and evil, so that a child turns ashen in sleep. A red flame sprang from your hand and there a night moth was burned. O flute of light, O flute of death. What had you stand so still on the decayed stair in the house of your ancestors? Below at the gate an angel knocks with crystalline finger.

O the hell of sleep; dark valley, little brown garden. At evening softly sound the dead forms. Tiny green flowers scattered round them and their countenance has departed. Or, deceased, it inclines over the cold brow of the murderer in the dark of the hallway; adoration, crimson flame of lust; dying the sleeper fell over black steps into darkness.

Someone left you at the crossroads and you gaze back for a long time. Silver step in the shadow of crippled little apple trees. Crimson glows the fruit amidst the black branches and in the grass the snake sheds its skin. O! the darkness; sweat that emerges on the icy brow and mournful dreams in wine, in the village tavern beneath smoke-blackened beams. You, still wilderness that conjures rosy islands from brown tobacco clouds and draws from within the wild cry of the Griffin, as he hunts around black cliffs in sea, storm and ice. You, a green metal and within a fiery face that will go forth and from the hill of bones and the angel’s flaming fall sing of dark times. O! despair, that with mute cry falls to its knees.

A dead one visits you. From the heart the self-spilt blood runs and in the black eyebrow the unutterable moment rests; dark encounter. You—a crimson moon, as the other appears in the green shade of the olive tree. From this follows eternal night.

AUTUMN OF THE LONELY

In the Park

Ever roaming the old park,
O stillness of flowers yellow and red.
You also mourn, you gentle gods,
And the autumn gold of the elm.
Motionless in the bluish pond rise
The reeds, at evening the thrush falls silent.
O! then you too incline the brow
Before the ancestors’ decayed marble.

A Winter Evening

(version 2)

When snow falls against the window,
Long tolls the evening bell,
For many is the table prepared
And the house is in good order.

Some on their wanderings
Come to the gate by dark pathways.
Golden blooms the tree of grace
Out of the earth’s cool sap.

Wayfarer steps silently inside;
Pain has made stony the threshold.
There in pure radiance
Bread and wine upon the table.

The Cursed

I

Dusk falling. The old women go to the well.
In the dark shadow of the chestnuts a red laughs.
From a shop flows the perfume of bread
And sunflowers sink over the fence.

By the river the inn murmurs soft and mild.
A guitar hums; jingling of coins.
A halo falls upon that little girl,
Who waits before the glass door gentle and white.

O! blue radiance she awakens in the panes,
Framed by thorns, black and stonily enraptured.
A stooped writer smiles as if insane
Into water that a wild commotion stirs.

II

At evening plague borders her blue vestment
And softly a sinister guest closes the door.
Through the window sinks the maple’s black burden;
A young boy lays the brow in her hand.

Often her lids sink evil and heavy.
The child’s hands run through her hair
And his tears fall hot and clear
Into her sockets black and vacant.

A nest of scarlet-coloured snakes coil up
Sluggishly in her turbulent womb.

Her arms let go something dead,
Enclosed by a carpet’s sorrow.

III

In the little brown garden a carillon sounds.
A blueness floats in the darkness of chestnuts,
The sweet cloak of a stranger.
Scent of mignonettes and a glowing sense

Of evil. The moist brow bows cold and pale
Over filth where the rat burrows,
Bathed by the soft scarlet lustre of stars;
In the garden the apples fall dull and soft.

The night is black. Ghostly the Föhn swells
The wandering boy’s white nightgown
And softly gropes the hand of the dead
In his mouth. Sonja smiles soft and beautiful.

Sonja

Evening returns to the old garden;
Sonja’s life, blue stillness.
Wild birds’ migratory journeys;
Bare tree in autumn and stillness.

Sunflower, gently inclined
Over Sonja’s white life.
Wound, red, revealed to none
Allows life into dark rooms,

Where blue bells are chiming;
Sonja’s step and gentle stillness.
A dying animal greets, in slipping away,
Naked tree in autumn and stillness.

Sun of an older time is shining
Above Sonja’s white brows,
Snow, which moistens her cheek,
And her brows’ wilderness.

Along

Corn and grape have been cut,
The hamlet in autumn and rest.
Hammer and anvil ring for ever,
Laughter in crimson bower.

Asters from dark fences
Bring to the white child.
Say how long we've been dead;
The sun seeks to appear black.

Little red fish in the pond;
Brow that fearfully hearkens to itself;
Softly the evening wind soughs at the window,
Blue organ droning.

Star and secret gleaming
Grant one more upward gaze.
Apparition of the mother in pain and dread;
In the dark, black mignonettes.

Autumn Soul

(version 2)

Hunter’s call and blood baying;
Behind cross and brown hill
Softly blinds the pond mirror,
The hawk cries harsh and clear.

Over stubble field and path
A black silence already quivers;
Purer sky in the branches;
Only the brook runs silent and calm.

Fish and game soon slip away.
Blue soul, dark wandering
Soon parted us from loves, others.
Evening changes sense and image.

Bread and wine of a righteous life,
God into your mild hands
Man lays the dark end,
All guilt and red torment.

Afra

(version 2)

A child with brown hair. Prayer and amen
Silently darken the evening coolness
And Afra’s smile red in yellow frame
Of sunflowers, dread and grey sultriness.

Shrouded in a blue cloak the monk saw her
In times past piously painted on church glass;
This still grants friendly conduct through pain,
When her stars ghost through his blood.

Autumn decline; and the elder trees’ silence.
Brow touches the blue stirring of waters,
A cloth of hair laid over the bier.

Rotten fruit drops from branches;
Unspeakable is the flight of birds, encounter
With the dying; then follow the dark years.

Autumn of the Lonely

Dark autumn returns swollen with fruits and abundance,
The yellowed lustre of beautiful summer days.
A pure blue steps from a decayed shell;
With age-old legends bird flight resounds.
Wine is pressed, the mild stillness
Suffused with quiet replies to dark questions.

And here and there a cross on a hill desolate;
Into red forests a herd fades away.
Over the mirror pond a cloud strays;
The peasant’s sober gesture comes to rest.
So softly stirs evening’s blue flight
A roof of dry straw, the black earth.

Soon stars nestle in the brow of the weary one;
In cool rooms a quiet modesty returns
And angels step softly from the blue
Eyes of lovers who more calmly bear their torment.
Rustling of reeds; a bony horror attacks,
When from bare willows black dew drips.

SEVEN-SONG OF DEATH

Rest and Silence

Shepherds buried the sun in the bare forest.
A fisherman hauled
The moon in nets of hair from the frozen pond.

In blue crystal
Pale man dwells, cheek resting against his stars;
Or bows the head in crimson sleep.

But still he who gazes out is touched
By black flight of birds, blue flowers and their holiness,
A nearer stillness ponders the forgotten, angels extinguished.

Once more the brow grows dark in lunar stone;
A radiant youth
The sister appears in autumn and black corruption.

Anif

Memory: gulls gliding over the dark sky
Man melancholy.
Silent you dwell in the shade of the autumn ash,
Rapt in the righteous body of the hill;

Ever you walk down the green river,
When evening has come,
Sounding love; placidly the dark prey encounters,

A rosier man. Drunk with bluish weather
The dying leaf stirs the brow
Musing on the mother’s grave countenance;
O, how all sinks into darkness;

Severe rooms and the ancient objects
Of the ancestors.
These shatter the stranger’s breast.
O, you signs and stars.

Great is the guilt of the born. Woe, you golden shudder
Of death,
When the soul dreams cooler blooms.

Ever in bare branches the night bird calls
Above the step of the lunar-one,
By village walls an icy wind resounds.

Birth

Mountains: blackness, silence, snow.
Red from the forest the hunt descends;
O, the mossy glances of the deer.

Stillness of the mother; beneath black pines
The sleeping hands unfold,
When the cold moon appears decayed.

Oh, the birth of man. Nightly blue waters
Rush over the bed of rocks;
Sighing the fallen angel beholds his image,

A pale thing awakens in the musty room.
Two moons
The eyes of the old stone woman are gleaming.

Woe, the birthing scream. With black wing
Night touches the boy’s temples,
Snow, that sinks softly from crimson cloud.

Decline

(version 5)

To Karl Borromaeus Heinrich

Over the white pond
The wild birds have journeyed on.
At evening an icy wind blows from our stars.

Over our graves
Bows the shattered brow of night.
Beneath oaks we rock in a silver boat.

Ever the white walls of the city ring out.
Beneath arches of thorn
O my brother we blind clock-hands climb towards midnight.

To One Who Died Young

O, the black angel, who stepped softly from inside the tree,
When we were gentle playmates in the evening,
At the edge of the bluish fountain.
Peaceful was our footfall, eyes round in autumn’s brown coolness,
O, the stars’ crimson sweetness.

But one who descended the stone steps of the Mönchsberg,
A blue smile on his face and strangely cocooned
In his calmer childhood, died;
And in the garden the wind’s silver face remained,
Listening in the leaves, in old stones.

Soul sang of death, green decay of the flesh
And it was the stirring of the forest,
The ardent lament of the deer.
Always from the towers at dusk rang the blue evening bells.

The hour came when he saw shadows in the crimson sun,
In bare branches shadows of corruption;
At evening, when by dusking walls the blackbird sang,
Silently in the room appeared the spirit of one who died young.

O, blood that drains from the throat of the resounding one,
Blue flower; O, the fiery tear
Wept into night.

Golden cloud and time. In a lonely room
You request a visit from the dead one often,
Down the green river beneath elms you stroll in warm conversation.

Spiritual Dusk

(version 2)

Silent, encounters at the forest edge
A dark deer;
Softly dies the evening wind on the hill,

The blackbird’s lament is at peace,
And the gentle flutes of autumn
Silence in the reeds.

On a black cloud
Drunk with poppy you travel
The nocturnal pond,

The starry heavens.
Ever the sister’s lunar voice sounds
Through spiritual night.

Western Song

O the soul’s nocturnal wingbeat:
Shepherds we once passed along dusking woods
And red game followed, green flower and the babbling spring
Filled with humility. O, the ancient sound of the cricket,
Blood blooming on the sacrificial stone
And the solitary bird’s cry over the green stillness of the pond.

O, you crusades and glowing torments
Of the flesh, the fall of crimson fruit
In the evening garden, where in bygone ages the pious disciples walked,
Warriors now, waking from wounds and dreams of stars.
O, the soft cyan cluster of night.

O, you times of stillness and golden autumns,
When we peaceful monks trod the crimson grape;
And all around hill and forest shone.
O you hunts and castles; evening rest,
When in his cell man reflected on the righteous,
In mute prayer wrestled for the living head of God.

O, the bitter hour of downfall,
When we inspect a stony face in black waters.
But in radiance the lovers lift silver lids:
One sex. Incense streams from rosy pillows
And the sweet song of the resurrected.

Transfiguration

When evening appears,
A blue countenance gently deserts you.
A tiny bird trills in the tamarind tree.

A gentle monk
Folds the hands of the dead.
A white angel haunts Mary.

A nocturnal wreath
Of violets, corn and purple grapes
Is the year of the gazing one.

At your feet
The graves of the dead open,
When you rest a brow in silver hands.

Silent dwells
The autumn moon at your mouth,
Dark song drunk with juice of poppy;

Blue flower
That softly sounds in yellowed stones.

Föhn

Blind lament on the wind, lunar winter days,
Childhood, softly steps fade by the black hedge,
Long the evening bells.
Softly the white night comes in,

Turns to crimson dreams the pain and pestilence
Of stony life,
That the thorny barb never relinquishes the rotting body.

Deep in slumber the anxious soul sighs,

Deep the wind in broken trees,
And the lamenting figure
Of the mother sways through the lonely forest

Of this silent grief; nights,
Filled with tears, angels afire.
Silver against a bare wall a childlike skeleton shatters.

The Wayfarer

(version 2)

Ever the white night leans against the hill,
Where in silver sound the poplar looms,
Star and stone can be found.

Sleeping, the path arches over the torrent,
A dead countenance follows the boy,
Crescent moon in rosy ravine

Distant shepherds praising. From old stone
The toad gazes out of crystal eyes,
The blossoming wind awakes, birdcall of the death-like one
And steps green softly in the woods.

These recall tree and beast. Slow steps of moss;
And the moon,
Which glowing sinks into mournful waters.

The other returns once more and strolls to the green shore,
Rocking on black gondolas through the decayed city.

Karl Kraus

White high priest of truth,
Crystal voice, in which God’s icy breath lives,
Raging sorcerer,
Under whose flaming coat jangles the warrior’s blue armour.

To the Silenced

O, the insanity of the great city, where at nightfall
Against black walls the stunted trees stare,
The spirit of evil spies from a silver mask;
Light with magnetic scourge drives out stony night.
O, the sunken tolling of evening bells.

Whore, who in icy shudders bears a dead child.
Raving, God’s wrath lashes the brow of one possessed,
Purple plague, hunger, that breaks green eyes.
O, the horrible laughter of gold.

But in dark caves a mankind more silent bleeds,
From hard metals forms the redeeming head.

Passion

(version 3)

When Orpheus silver stirs the lyre,
Lamenting the dead in the evening garden,
Who are you at rest beneath high trees?
Lament rustles the autumn reeds,
The blue pond,
Dying away beneath greening trees
And following the sister’s shadow;
Dark love
Of a wild race,
From which the day rushes on wheels of gold.
Silent night.

Beneath dark firs
Two wolves married their blood
In stony embrace; a golden form
The cloud vanished over the little bridge,
Patience and silence of childhood.
Encounter again the tender corpse
By the Triton pond
Slumbering in her hyacinthine hair.
That the cool head might shatter at last!

For always a blue deer follows,
An eyeing form beneath dusking trees,
These darker paths
Waking and stirred by nocturnal melodies,
Gentle madness;
Or the string play sounded
Swollen with dark ecstasy
At the cool feet of the penitent woman

In the stony city.

Seven-song of Death

Bluish dusks springtime; under sucking trees
A dark shape wanders into evening and decay,
Hearkening to the blackbird’s gentle lament.
Silently night appears, a bloodied deer,
Which slowly sinks down on the hill.

In damp air blooming apple boughs sway,
Serpentine shapes that silvery release,
Dying away from nocturnal eyes; falling stars;
Gentle song of childhood.

Appearing clearer the sleeper descended the black forest,
And a blue spring sighed from the ground,
So that the other slowly lifted pale lids
Over his snowy countenance;

And the moon chased a red beast
From its cavern;
And in sighing died the dark lament of the women.

More radiant he raised his hands towards his star
The white stranger;
Silently a dead form departs the derelict house.

O the putrefied figure of man: cast from cold metals,
Night and horror of sunken forests
And the torrid beast’s wilderness;
Dead calm of the soul.

In a blackish boat the other drifted down shimmering rivers,
Brimming with crimson stars, and peacefully
The verdurous branches sank over him,

Poppy from silver clouds.

Winter Night

Snow has fallen. After midnight drunk on purple wine you depart the dark domain of men, the red flame of their hearth. O darkness!

Black frost. The earth is hard, the air tastes of bitterness. Your stars conspire to form evil signs.

With petrified steps you stamp along the embankment, eyes like discs, those of a soldier storming a dark trench. Avanti!

Bitter the snow and moon!

A red wolf, which an angel is strangling. Your marching legs jangle like blue ice and a smile filled with sorrow and pride has petrified your face and your brow pales in the lust of the frost;

or silently inclines over the sleep of a watchman, who sank down in his wooden hut.

Frost and smoke. A shirt of white stars burns the wearer’s shoulders and God’s vultures tear apart your metal heart.

O the stony hill. Peaceful and forgotten the cool body melts away in silver snow.

Black is sleep. Long the ear follows the path of stars in ice.

On awakening the village bells were ringing. The rosy day stepped silver through the eastern gate.

SONG OF THE DEPARTED

In Venice

Stillness in nocturnal chamber
The candlestick flickers silver
Before the singing breath
Of the lonely one;
Enchanted rose-clouds.

Black fly swarm
Darkens the stone space
And from the agony
Of the golden day stares
The head of the homeless one.

Into night the sea at rest.
Star and blackish voyage
Vanished by the canal.
Child, your sickly smile
Followed me softly into sleep.

Limbo

(version 2)

By autumnal walls, there shadows seek
Ringing gold upon the hill
Evening clouds that graze
In the withered plane trees' calm.
Darker tears this age exhales,
Damnation, when the dreamer's heart
Overflows with crimson sunset,
The melancholy of the smoking city;
Golden coolness blows after the walker
The stranger, from the graveyard,
As though a tender corpse followed in the shadows.

Softly chimes the stone building;
The orphans' garden, the dark hospital,
A red ship on the canal.
Dreaming rise and fall in darkness
Putrefying people rise and sink
And from blackish gates
Angels step with icy brows;
Blueness, the death lament of mothers.
Through their long hair rolls
A fiery wheel, the round day
Earth's agony without end.

In cool rooms without meaning
Belongings moulder, with bony hands
Unholy childhood
Gropes in the blue for fairy tales,
The fat rat gnaws door and coffer,
A heart

Stiffens in snowy silence.
The crimson curses of hunger resound
In mouldering darkness,
The black swords of lies,
As though a brazen gate slammed shut.

The Sun

Daily the yellow sun comes over the hill.
Beautiful is the forest, the dark beast,
Man; hunter or shepherd.

Reddish rises the fish in the green pond.
Beneath rounded skies
The fisherman moves softly in a blue boat.

Slowly ripens the grape, the corn.
As day closes in stillness,
A good and an evil is prepared.

When night comes,
The wayfarer softly lifts his heavy lids;
Sun breaks from a dark abyss.

Song of a Captive Blackbird

For Ludwig von Ficker

Dark breath in green branches.
Little blue flowers float before the face
Of the solitary, the golden footfall
Dying away beneath the olive tree.
Night flutters up on drunken wing.
So quietly bleeds humility,
Dew, that slowly drips from the blossoming thorn.
The compassion of radiant arms
Enfolds a breaking heart.

Summer

At evening the cuckoo’s lament
Falls silent in the wood.
Deeper bends the corn,
The red poppy.

Black thunderstorm threatens
Over the hill.
The age-old song of the cricket
Fades out in the field.

The leaves of the chestnut
Stir no more.
On the spiral staircase
Your dress rustles.

In stillness the candle shines
In the dark room;
A silver hand
Closes over it;

Still wind, starless night.

Close of Summer

The green summer has fallen so quiet,
Your crystal countenance.
By the evening pond the flowers died,
The blackbird’s startled call.

Futile hope of life. Already the swallow
In the house prepares for the journey
And the sun sinks by the hill;
Already night beckons on its own star journey.

Silence of villages; all around
The deserted woods resound. Heart,
Incline now more lovingly
Over the peaceful sleeping woman.

The green summer has fallen so quiet
And the steps of the stranger ring out
Through the silver night.
Should a blue deer recall its path,

The harmonious sound of its spiritual years!

Year

Dark stillness of childhood. Under greening ash trees
Meekness of a bluish glance grazes; golden peace.
A dark thing delights in the scent of violets; swaying corn
At evening, seed and the golden shadows of melancholy.
The carpenter hews the beam, on shadowy ground
The mill grinds; in the hazel leaves a crimson mouth arches,
Masculine red bowed over silent waters.
Gentle is autumn, spirit of the woods; golden cloud
Follows the lonely one, the black shade of the grandchild.
Dying out in stony room; beneath old cypresses
Nightly images of tears gather in the spring;
Golden eye of beginning, dark patience of the end.

The West

(version 4)

To Else Lasker-Schüler, in veneration

I

Moon, as though a dead one
Stepped from a blue cavern,
And the blossoms fell in number
Across the rocky path.
Silver weeps a sick one
By the evening pond,
In a black boat
The lovers crossing over met death.

Or the footsteps of Elis
Ring through the grove
The hyacinthine
Dying away again beneath the oaks.
O the figure of that boy
Wrought from crystal tears,
Nocturnal shadows.
Jagged lightning lit up temples
The ever-cool,
When on the greening hill
Springtime storms resound.

II

So quiet are the green forests
Of our homeland,
The crystal wave

Dying against the ruined wall
And we have wept in sleep;
Along the thorny hedgerow
Singers wander, footsteps wavering
In the evening summer,
In holy peace
Of the vineyard’s distant radiance;
Shadows now in the cool bosom
Of night, eagles mourning.
So gently a moonbeam closes
The crimson marks of sorrow.

III

You giant cities
Raised in stone
Upon the plain!
So dumbstruck
And with darkened brow
The exiled follows the wind,
Bare trees upon the hill.
You rivers dusking in the distance!
Mighty angst
Gruesome sunset
Amongst the storm clouds.
You dying peoples!
Ashen wave
Shattered on the shore of night,
Falling stars.

Springtime of the Soul

Outcry in sleep; down black lanes the wind sweeps,
The blue of spring beckons through breaking branches,
Crimson night dew and all around stars extinguished.
Greenish dusks the river, silver the old avenues
And the towers of the city. O gentle drunkenness
In the gliding boat and the blackbird’s dark call
In childlike gardens. Already the rosy veil clears.

Solemnly murmur the waters. O moist shadows of the pasture,
The striding creature; greenery, blossoming boughs
Touch the crystal brow; shimmering boat-sway.
Softly sounds the sun in rosy clouds on the hill.
Great is the stillness of the fir forest, solemn shadows at river’s edge.

Purity! Purity! Where are the terrible paths of the dead,
Of grey stony silence, the rocks of night
And shadows without peace? The sun’s radiant abyss.

Sister, when I found you in the lonely glade
In the forest, it was noon and great was the beast’s silence;
White under wild oak, and silver blossomed the thorn.
Vast dying and singing flame in the heart.

Darker flow the waters around the lovely play of fish.
Hour of sorrow, the sun’s silent image;
The soul is a stranger of earth. Blueness dusks
Spiritually over the cut-back forest and a dark bell
Chimes long in the village; peaceful cortège.
Silently the myrtle blooms over white lids of the dead.

Softly the waters sound in the sinking afternoon
And on the banks the wilderness greens more darkly, joy on a rosy wind;

By the evening hill the brothers’ gentle song.

In Darkness

(version 2)

The soul silences blue springtime.
Beneath damp evening boughs
The brows of lovers sank in shivers.

O the greening cross. In dark discourse
Man and woman knew each other.
By the bare wall
The solitary wanders with his stars.

Over the moon-bright woodland paths
Sank the wilderness
Of forgotten hunts; blue glance
Breaks from decayed rocks.

Song of the Departed

To Karl Borromaeus Heinrich

Harmony-filled is the flight of birds. The green forests
At evening have gathered into the more silent huts;
The crystal meadows of the roe.
A darkness softens the plash of the brook, moist shadows

And the flowers of summer that ring beautifully on the wind.
Already darkens the brow of musing man.

And a little lamp shines, goodness, in his heart
And the peace of the meal; for bread and wine are blessed
By God's hands, and out of nocturnal eyes
The brother silently gazes on you, so he might rest from thorny wandering.
O to dwell in the soulful blueness of night.

Lovingly the room's silence also embraces the shades of the ancestors,
The crimson martyrs, lament of a mighty race
That piously dies out in the lonely grandchild.

For from black minutes of madness the sufferer awakens more radiant
On the petrified threshold
And the blue coolness embraces him powerfully and the lucent close of autumn,

The silent house and the saying of the forest,
Measure and law and lunar paths of the departed.

DREAM AND DERANGEMENT

Dream and Derangement

In the evening the father became an old man; in dark rooms the countenance of the mother turned stony and the boy felt upon him the weight of the degenerated race. Sometimes he recalled his childhood, crowded with sickness, horror and morbid anxiety, secretive games in the star-garden, or feeding rats in the courtyard at dusk. From the blue mirror stepped the slender form of the sister and he plunged into darkness as if dead. At night his mouth burst open like a red fruit and stars shone over his speechless sorrow. His dreams filled the ancient house of the fathers. At evening he liked to walk through the decayed churchyard, or he contemplated the corpses in the darkening crypts, the green mottles of putrefaction on their beautiful hands. At the door of the convent he asked for a crust of bread; the shade of a black horse leapt from the darkness and he was struck with terror. When he lay on his cool bed, unspeakable sobbing overcame him. But there was no one who might have lain a hand on his brow. When autumn came, he went, a seer, into the brown lowlands. O, the hours of wild ecstasy, the evenings by the green river, the hunts. O, the soul, which softly sang the song of the yellowed reed; fiery piety. Silent and long he gazed into the starry eyes of the toad, felt with trembling hand the coolness of ancient stone and discoursed with the sacred legend of the blue source. O, the silver fish and the fruit, which fell from crippled trees. The chords of his steps filled him with pride and disdain for men. On the way home he came upon an uninhabited palace. Decayed gods stood in the garden, mourning in the evening. But to him it seemed: here I lived forgotten years. An organ chorale filled him with a trembling of God. But he spent his days in a dark cave, lied and stole and hid, a flaming wolf, before the mother’s white countenance. O, the hour when, with stony mouth, he sank down in the star-garden, the murderer’s shadow fell over him. With crimson brow he walked onto the moor and God’s wrath chastened his metal shoulders; O, the birches in the storm, the dark animals which shunned his deranged paths. Hate burned his heart, lust, when in the green summer garden he

showed violence to the silent child, and recognized in the radiance his own insane countenance. Woe, in the evening by the window, when from purple flowers, a greyish skeleton, death stepped. O, you towers and bells; and the shadows of night fell stony upon him.

No one loved him. Lie and unchasteness burned his head in darkening rooms. The blue rustle of a woman's gown made him stiffen into a column and the nocturnal form of his mother stood in the doorway. Above his head loomed the spirit of evil. O, you nights and stars. At evening he walked with the cripple by the mountain; upon the icy summit lay the rosy glow of sunset and his heart rang out softly in the dusk. The stormy firs sank heavily over them and the red hunter stepped out of the forest. When night fell, his heart shattered like crystal and darkness beat at his temples. Beneath bare oaks he strangled a wild cat with icy hands. To his right emerged the form of an angel in lament, and in the darkness the shadow of the cripple grew. But he lifted a stone and threw it at the other, so he fled howling, and in the tree's shadow the gentle countenance of the sighing angel died out. Long he lay on a stony field and gazed in awe at the golden tent of stars. Hounded by bats, he fell back into the darkness. Breathless he entered the decayed house. In the yard he, a wild beast, drank the well's blue water, until he turned cold. Feverishly he sat on the icy stair, railing against God, that he might perish. O, the grey countenance of horror, when he lifted round eyes over the slit throat of a dove. Sweeping up unknown stairs he encountered a Jewish girl and grasped at her black hair and seized her mouth. Hostile forms followed him through dark lanes and his ear was torn by the clang of iron. Along autumnal walls he, a boy sacristan, followed the silent priest; beneath withered trees drunkenly he breathed in the scarlet of his solemn vestment. O, the decayed disk of the sun. Sweet torments consumed his flesh. In a deserted passage his own bloodied form appeared to him, stiff with muck. More deeply he admired the noble works of stone; the tower that nightly storms the blue firmament with hellish grimaces; the cool grave, in which man's fiery heart is enshrined. Woe to the speechless guilt it signifies. But when he walked along the autumnal river beneath bare trees pondering the glowing, a flaming demon appeared to him in a hairy coat, the sister. Awakening, the stars died out above their heads.

O this accursed race. When in tarnished rooms every destiny has been fulfilled, death enters the house with decayed steps. O, that outside it was

spring and a beautiful bird was singing in the blossoming tree. But greyish the meagre green withers at the windows of the nocturnal ones and the bleeding hearts still ponder evil. O, the dusking spring paths of those who ponder. More righteously he delights in the blossoming hedge, the farmer’s first sowing and the singing bird, God’s gentle creature; the evening bell and the beautiful fraternity of man. So that he might forget his fate and the spike of the thorn. Freely greens the brook, where silver his foot wanders, and a telling tree rustles above his demented head. So with silver hand he lifts the serpent, and in fiery sobbing his heart melted away. Exalted is the silence of the forest, greening darkness and the mossy wildlife, fluttering up as night falls. O the shudder, when every being is aware of its guilt, walks thorny paths. So he found the white form of the child in the thorn bush, bleeding for the coat of its bridegroom. But he stood before her buried in his steely hair, silent and suffering. O the shining angels, whom the crimson night wind scattered. Night-long he dwelt in a crystal cavern and leprosy grew silver on his brow. A shadow, he went down the border path beneath autumn stars. Snow fell, and blue mournfulness filled the house. Like a blind man the hard voice of the father rang out and instilled dread. Woe of the bowed appearance of women. Under stiffened hands progeny and instruments of a terrified race decayed. A wolf tore the firstborn and the sisters fled into dark gardens to bony old men. A deranged seer, the other sang along mouldered walls and his voice devoured God’s wind. O the lust of death. O you children of a dark race. Silver shimmer the evil blooms of the blood on the temple of the other, the cold moon in his broken eyes. O, the nocturnal ones, O, the accursed.

Deep is the slumber in dark poisons, filled with stars and the white countenance of the mother, the stony one. Bitter is death, sustenance of the guilt-laden; in the brown branches of the ancestral tree, smirking, the earthen faces decay. But softly sang the other in the green shadow of the elderberry, when he woke from evil dreams; sweet plaything, a rosy angel approached him, so that he, gentle deer, slept into night; and he saw the starry countenance of purity. When summer came the sunflowers sank golden over the garden fence. O, the industry of bees and the walnut tree’s green leaves; passing thunderstorms. Silver the poppy also bloomed, in green bud bore our nocturnal star dreams. O, how silent the house when the father passed into darkness. The fruit ripened crimson on

the tree and the gardener moved his rough hands; O the hirsute signs in the streaming sun. But at evening silently the dead man’s shadow entered the circle of the mourners and crystalline sounded his step over the green meadow by the forest. Silent, those gathered around the table; with waxen hands the dying broke the bread, the bleeding. Woe of the sister’s stony eyes, when at the meal her madness broke out on the brother’s temple, when beneath the mother’s anguished hands the bread became stone. O the putrefied, when with silver tongues they silenced hell. So the lamps in the cool room died out and through crimson masks the people silently watched each other. Night-long the rain poured and refreshed the meadow. In thorny wilderness the dark one followed yellow paths through the corn, song of the lark and gentle stillness of green branches, so that peace is found. O, you hamlets and mossy steps, radiant view. But bony steps falter over sleeping serpents at the forest edge and always the ear follows the cruel shriek of the vulture. At evening he found a stony wasteland, escort of the dead into the dark house of the father. Crimson cloud smothered his head, so he silently savaged his own blood and image, a lunar countenance; sank away stonily into emptiness, when in a broken mirror, a dying youth, the sister appeared, night devoured the accursed race.

POEMS PUBLISHED IN *DER BRENNER*, 1914–15

In Hellbrunn

Ever shadowing the blue lament of evening
Along the hill, the springtime pond—
As though the shades of those long deceased,
The bishops and noblewomen, floated over them—
Already their flowers bloom, earnest violets
In evening ground, soughing of the blue source’s
Crystal wave. So spiritually green
The oaks over the forgotten paths of the dead,
Golden cloud over the pond.

The Heart

The wild heart turned white in the wood;
O dark dread
Of death, so gold
Died in a grey cloud.
November evening.
At the stark gate of the slaughterhouse
Stood the throng of pauper women;
Into every basket
Putrid flesh and entrails fall;
Accursed fare!

Evening’s blue dove
Brought no atonement.
Dark call of trumpets
Passed through the elms’
Damp golden leaf,
A tattered banner
Smoking with blood,
So that in savage melancholy
A man listens.
O! you brazen ages
Buried there in the glow of sunset.

From the darkened hallway stepped
The golden form
Of the maiden youth
Enclosed by pale moons,
Autumnal courtiers,
Black firs felled
In the night storm,
The sheer fortress.
O heart

Shimmering in snowy coolness.

Sleep

(version 2)

Cursed you dark poisons,
White sleep!
This most strange garden
Of dusking trees
Filled with snakes, moths,
Spiders, bats.
Stranger! Your doomed shadow
In the sunset’s afterglow,
A dark corsair
In the salty sea of woe.
At the edge of night white birds flutter up
Over falling cities
Of steel.

The Thunderstorm

You wild mountains, the eagle’s
Noble grief.
Golden cloud
Smokes over stony wasteland.
The firs breathe patient stillness,
Black lambs at the abyss,
When suddenly the blue
Grows strangely silent,
The bumblebees’ gentle drone.
O green flower—
O silence.

Dreamlike the dark spirits of the torrent
Overwhelm the heart,
Darkness,
That closes in over the ravines!
White voices
Roaming through eerie courtyards,
Torn terraces,
The fathers’ massive resentment, the lament
Of mothers,
Golden war cry of the boy
And the one unborn
Sighs from blind eyes.

Oh pain, flaming contemplation
Of the great soul!
Already in the black melee
Of horses and carriages
A ghoulish rose-hued lightening
In resounding pines.
Magnetic coolness

Floats about this fevered head,
Glowing melancholy
Of a wrathful god.

Fear, you venomous snake,
Black, die in stone!
So the tears flow down
In wild torrents,
Storm-mercy,
Thunder threatening echoes
On snowy summits all around.
Fire
Purifies torn night.

Evening

With dead hero forms
Moon you fill
The silent forests,
Crescent moon—
With the gentle embrace
Of lovers,
The shadows of eminent ages
The mouldering rocks all around;
So bluish it shines
Towards the city,
Where cold and evil
A decaying race dwells,
Grooming a dark future
For the white grandchildren.
You moon-swallowed shadows
Sighing in the crystal void
Of the mountain lake.

Night

I sing you wild fissure,
In the night storm
Towering mountains;
You grey towers
Brimming with hellish grimaces,
Fiery beasts,
Rough ferns, spruces,
Crystal flowers.
Agony everlasting,
That you hunt for God
Gentle spirit,
Sighing in the falls,
In surging pines.

Golden flares the fire
About the gathered peoples.
Over blackish outcrops
Drunk with death
Plunges the glowing wind bride,
The blue wave
Of the glacier
And it drones
Mightily the bell in the valley:
Flames, curses
And the dark play of lust,
A stony head
Storms heaven.

Melancholy (II)

Mighty are you dark mouth
From within, figure formed
Of autumn clouds,
Golden evening stillness;
A greenish dusking mountain stream
In shattered pine
Shadow district;
A village,
That decays devoutly in brown images.

There black horses frisk
On the misty pasture.
You soldiers!
From the hill, where the sun rolls dying,
The laughing blood plunges—
Beneath oaks
Dumbstruck! O glowering melancholy
Of the army; a shining helmet
Sank clanking from the crimson brow.

Autumn night so cool advances,
Gleaming with stars
Over the shattered remains of men
The peaceful maiden monk.

The Homecoming

(version 2)

Coolness of the dark years,
Suffering and hope
Preserved in cyclopean stone,
Mountains free of men,
Golden breath of autumn,
Evening cloud—
Purity!

Gazing out from blue eyes
Crystal childhood;
Beneath dark spruce
Love, hope,
So that from fiery lids
Dew drips into stiffened grass—
Irresistibly!

O! there the golden bridge
Breaking apart in the snow
Of the abyss!
Blue coolness
Breathes the valley at night,
Faith, hope!
Greetings you lonely graveyard!

Lament

Youth from crystal mouth
Into the valley sank your golden glance;
Red and pale the forest’s wave
In the black evening hour.
Evening strikes so deep a wound!

Fear! Death’s dream complaint,
Dead, grave and stark, the year
Gazes out from tree and deer;
Bare field and farmed earth.
The herdsman calls in his fearful flock.

Sister, your blue brows
Beckon softly in the night.
Organ sighs and hell laughs
And a horror grips the heart;
Desire to gaze on stars and angels.

Mother laments before her infant;
Red sounds the ore in the shaft,
Lust, tears and stony pain,
Dark legends of the Titans.
Melancholy! The lonely eagle’s lament.

Surrender to Night

Maiden monk! Enfold me in your darkness,
Your mountains cool and blue!
Down bleeds the dark dew;
Sheer rises the cross in glitter of stars.

Crimson broke mouth and lie
Cool in the decayed chamber;
Laughter still shines, golden play,
A bell’s last labours.

Moon cloud! Blackish falls
Wild fruit from the tree at night
And the room becomes a grave,
And a dream this earthly pilgrimage.

In the East

Dark is the wrath of the people
Like the wild organs of winter storm,
The crimson wave of battle,
Stripped leaf stars.

With shattered brows, silver arms
The night beckons dying soldiers.
In the shade of the autumn ash
The spirits of the slain are sighing.

Thorny wilderness girds the city.
From bleeding steps the moon
Chases the terrified women.
Wild wolves broke through the gate.

Lament (II)

Sleep and death, the dark eagles
Night-long sweep about this head:
Eternity’s icy wave
Would engulf the golden image
Of man. On terrible reefs
His crimson body is smashed
And the dark voice laments
Over the sea.
Sister of stormy melancholy
Look a fearful boat sinks
Beneath stars,
The silent countenance of night.

Grodek

(version 2)

At evening the autumn woods resound
With deadly weapons, the golden plains
And blue lakes, above which the sun
Rolls more darkly; night embraces
Dying warriors, the wild lament
Of their shattered mouths.
But silent on the pasture land
Red cloud, in which a wrathful god resides
Gathers the blood spilt, lunar coolness;
All roads lead to black putrefaction.
Under golden shoots of night and stars
The sister’s shadow sways through the silent grove,
To greet the ghosts of heroes, the bleeding heads;
And softly in the reeds sound the dark flutes of autumn.
O prouder grief! You brazen altars,
Today a mighty anguish feeds the hot flame of the spirit,
The unborn descendants.

Revelation and Downfall

Strange are the nocturnal paths of men. As I sleepwalked past rooms of stone and in each a calm lamp burned, a copper candlestick, and as I sank freezing onto the bed, the black form of the female stranger stood over me and silently I hid my countenance in the slow hands. Also at the window the hyacinth had blossomed blue and the ancient prayer rose on the crimson lips of the one breathing, crystalline tears sank from lids wept over the bitter world. At this hour I was the white son at his father's death. In blue showers the night wind came from the hill, the dark lament of the mother again dying out, and I saw the black hell in my heart; minute of shimmering stillness. Softly an unspeakable countenance stepped from the chalky wall—a dying youth—the beauty of a homecoming race. Moon-white the coolness of stone enveloped the waking temple, on decayed stair the steps of the shadows faded, a rose-coloured roundelay in the little garden.

Silently I sat beneath smoky rafters in a deserted tavern, lonely with wine; a radiant corpse bent over a dark form and at my feet lay a dead lamb. Out of mouldered blueness stepped the pale form of the sister and her bleeding mouth spoke thus: pierce black thorn. O my silver arms still resound from wild thunderstorms. Flow blood from the moon feet, blossoming on nocturnal paths over which the rat streaks shrieking. You stars flicker in the arch of my brow; and softly the heart rings in the night. A red shade with flaming sword broke into the house, fled with snowy brow. O bitter death.

And a dark voice spoke out of me: I broke my horse's neck in the nocturnal forest when madness leapt from his purple eyes; over me fell the shadows of elms, the blue laughter of the source and the black coolness of night, as I a savage hunter flushed out a snowy deer; in stony hell my countenance died away.

And shimmering a drop of blood fell into the wine of the lonely one; and when I drank, it tasted more bitter than poppy; and a blackish cloud

enshrouded my head, the crystal tears of damned angels; and softly ran the blood from the sister’s silver wound and over me fell a fiery rain.

At the forest edge I go, a silent one, from whose speechless hands the sun of hair sank; stranger at the evening hill, who sobbing lifts lids over the stony city; a deer that stands silently in the peace of the ancient elder tree; O haunted the dusking head hearkens, or the faltering steps follow the blue cloud at the hill, solemn stars. To one side the green seed silently guides, furtively accompanies the doe on mossy woodland paths. The huts of the villagers are closed up in silence and the wild brook’s blue lament is frightening in the black calm of the wind.

But as I climbed down the rocky path, madness seized me and I let a shriek loud into the night; and as I with silver fingers inclined over the silent waters, I saw that my countenance had departed. And the white voice spoke to me: kill yourself! Sighing, the shadow of a boy rose in me and regarded me radiantly from crystalline eyes, so that I sank down sobbing beneath the trees, the mighty star vault.

Peaceful wanderings through wild rocks far from evening hamlets, homebound flocks; far off the sinking sun grazes on a meadow of crystal and its wild song trembles, the lonely bird cry, dying away in blue peace. But softly you come in the night, as I lay waking on the hill, or raving in spring storm; and ever blacker melancholy clouds the departed head, grim lightning bolts terrify the nocturnal soul, your hands tear my breathless breast.

As I walked in the dusking garden, and the black shape of evil yielded, the hyacinthine stillness of the night enveloped me; and I rode in a crooked boat over the restful pond and a sweet peace stirred my stony brow. Speechless I lay beneath the old willows and the blue sky was high above me and covered with stars; and as I faded away beholding, dread and deepest pain died within me; and the blue shadow of the boy rose radiant in darkness, gentle song; over greening treetops, crystal cliffs the white countenance of the sister rose on lunar wings.

With silver soles I descended thorny stairs and I stepped into the whitewashed chamber. Serenely a candle burned inside and silently I buried my head in crimson linen; and the earth gave back a child corpse,

a lunar form, which slowly stepped from my shadow, plunged down stonily with shattered arms, fleecy snow.

UNCOLLECTED POEMS AND PROSE

The Three Ponds in Hellbrunn

(version 3)

Strolling past the black walls
Of evenings, silver sounds the lyre
Of Orpheus in the dark pond
But spring drips in showers
From branches in wild showers
Of the night wind silver sounds the lyre
Of Orpheus in the dark pond
Dying away by greening walls.

In the distance shine castle and hill.
Voices of women who died long ago
Weave delicately and dark-coloured
Over the white nymphine mirror.
They lament their fleeting fate
And day flows into the green
Whispers in the reeds, hovering returns—
And with them a song thrush jokes.

The water shimmers greenish-blue
And calmly the cypresses breathe
And their measureless melancholy
Flows over into evening’s blue.

Tritons emerge from the waters,
Decay trickles through walls
The moon drapes itself in green veils
And passes slowly over the waters.

St Peter’s Churchyard

Rock loneliness is all around.
Death’s pale flowers shudder
On graves, which mourn in darkness—
Yet this mourning knows no grief.

Silently heaven smiles down
Into this dream-sealed garden,
Where silent pilgrims await it.
On every grave the cross awakes.

The church rises up like a prayer
Before an image of eternal grace,
Many a candle burns beneath the arches,
And mutely petitions poor souls—

While the trees bloom in the night,
That death would conceal his countenance
Within their beauty’s shimmering fullness,
That has the dead dream deeper still.

A Spring Evening

A shrub filled with larvae; evening Föhn in March;
A mad dog runs through a barren field
The priest’s bell rings through the brown village;
A bare tree is contorted in black anguish.

In the shadow of old roofs bleeds the maize;
O sweetness, which staunches the hunger of sparrows.
Through yellowed reed a deer breaks furtively.
O lonely stand before waters still and white.

Unspeakably the walnut tree’s dream shape rises.
The friend is cheered by the boys’ rustic play.
Decayed huts, decrepit feelings;
The clouds roam deeply, blackly massed.

In an Old Garden

Perfume of mignonette drifts away in brown greenness,
Flickering quivers on the lovely pond,
The willows stand clothed in white veils
Wherein butterflies sketch crazed circles.

Abandoned there the terrace suns itself,
Goldfish glint deep in the water mirror,
Sometimes clouds swim over the hill,
And slowly the strangers set out again.

Brightly the bowers shine, since young women
Passed this way in the early morning,
Their laughter stayed, hanging from small leaves,
In a golden haze a drunken faun dances.

Evening Roundelay

(version 1)

Aster fields, brown and blue
Children playing there by crypts
In the shining buoyant air
Gulls suspended silver-grey.

Strange life lives in the wine.
Play louder you violins
What lust! Racing roundelay
Shivering the night comes in.

You laugh so loud brown Gret
Confused the sea dreams in the mind
While a just withered rose
Drifts down before me.

Night Soul

(version 2)

Silently a blue deer came down from black forests
The soul,
When it was night, a snowy spring over mossy steps.

Blood and weapon tumult from times past
Sough in the pine ground,
Always the moon shines in decayed rooms;

Drunk with dark poisons, silver larva
Bowed over sleeping shepherds,
Head, that silently abandons its legends.

O, then the other slowly opens cold hands
Under stony arches
To the blind window softly climbs a golden summer

And the steps of the dancing woman ring in the green
Night-long,
More often in crimson murk the owl’s hoot calls the drunkard.

Desolation

I

Nothing more interrupts the silence of desolation. Over the dark, age-old treetops the clouds extend and are mirrored in the greenish-blue waters of the pond, which shines like an abyss. And motionless, as if sunk in mournful surrender, the surface rests—day in, day out.

In the midst of the dark pond rises the castle with pointed, decayed towers and roofs. Weeds grow over the black, cracked walls, and sunlight falls back from the round, blind windows. In the gloomy, dark courtyards doves fly about seeking a hiding place in the cracks of the walls.

Always they appear to be fearful, for they fly furtively and scurry past the windows. Down in the courtyard the fountain splashes gentle and refined. Now and then the doves drink from the fountain basin.

Through the narrow, dusty passageways of the castle sometimes a musty aroma of fever streaks, so in fright the bats flutter up. Otherwise nothing disturbs the deep rest.

But the apartments are a dusty black! High and bare and frosty and filled with deceased objects. Through the blind windows sometimes a tiny light comes that is absorbed again by the dark. Here the past is dead.

Here, one day it stiffened into a single, crippled rose. In its insubstantiality time passes unheeding.

And the silence of desolation pervades everything.

II

No one may enter the park any more. The branches of the trees are entangled a thousandfold, the whole park is nothing more than one giant organism.

And eternal night weighs beneath the spreading roof of leaves. And deep silence! And the air is saturated with a mouldering haze!

But sometimes the park awakes from heavy dreams. Then it drifts out a remembrance to cool starry nights, to secret hidden places, when it listened in on feverish kisses and embraces, to summer nights filled with ardent pomp and splendour, when the moon conjured confused images on the black ground, to people, who strolled with graceful chivalry full of rhythmic movements beneath its roof of leaves, who whispered sweet, mad words with tender propitious smiles.

And then the park sinks once more into its death-sleep.

On the waters the shadows of blood beeches and firs sway and from the depths of the pond a dull, mournful murmur comes.

Swans move over the gleaming waters, slow and still, their slender necks fully upright. They move along! Around the dead castle! Day in! Day out!

Pale lilies stand at the pond’s edge amongst sharply coloured grasses. And their shadows in the water are paler than themselves.

And when they die back, others emerge from the depths. And they resemble tiny dead-woman hands.

Huge fish swim inquisitively around the pale blooms with rigid, glassy eyes and then plunge into the depths again—soundlessly!

And the silence of desolation pervades everything.

III

And up there in a cracked tower chamber sits the count. Day in, day out.

He follows the clouds, which move over the treetops, luminous and pure. He likes to see the sun glowing in the clouds at evening when the sun sets. He hearkens to the sounds in the heights: to the cry of a bird flying past the tower or to the resounding roar of the wind when it whips around the castle.

He sees how the park slumbers, dull and oppressive, and he sees the swans gliding across the gleaming waters—which swim around the castle. Day in! Day out!

And the waters shimmer greenish-blue. But the clouds that pass over the castle are mirrored in the waters; and their shadows glow there radiant and pure as themselves. The waterlilies wave to him, like tiny dead-woman hands, and rock gently in the soft sounds of the wind, sadly, dreamily.

On all that surrounds him dying here, the poor count gazes like a little lunatic child over whom calamity looms, and who no longer has the strength to go on, who dies away like the morning shadows.

He listens only to the small, sorrowful melody of his soul: the past!

When evening comes, he lights his old, sooted lamp and reads in great yellowed tomes about the greatness and glory of the past.

He reads with a fevered, resounding heart, until the present, to which he does not belong, sinks away. And the shadows of the past loom up—immense. And he lives the life, the joyous beautiful life of his ancestors.

At nights, when the storm hunts about the tower, so that the walls creak down to their bedrock and frightened birds shriek at the windows, the count is overwhelmed by a nameless melancholy.

Doom weighs on his weary, centuries-old soul.

And he presses his face to the window and stares into the night beyond. There all appears to him hugely dreamlike, spectral! And horrifying. He hears the storm hurtle through the castle, as if it sought to sweep out all the dead things and scatter them on the air.

But if the confused phantasm of night sinks away like a conjured shadow—again the silence of desolation pervades everything.

De Profundis (II)

With night the chamber of the dead is filled
My father sleeps, I keep vigil.

The hard face of the dead one
Glimmers white in the candlelight.

The flowers have scent, the fly hums
Without feeling my heart listens and goes silent.

The wind beats softly at the door.
It opens with a bright clattering.

And outside a field of corn rustles,
In the firmament the sun crackles.

Heavy with fruit hang bush and tree
Birds and butterflies whir in space.

In the field the peasants mow
In the deep silence of noontide.

On one dead I make the sign of the cross
And soundlessly my step fades in the green.

At the Cemetery

Decayed stone towers sultrily warmed.
Yellow haze of incense hovers.
Bees hum in chaotic swarm
And the flower trellises quiver.

Slowly a feature stirs there
By walls stilled by sun,
Dies out glimmering, an illusion—
Deeply shiver songs for the dead.

Long it listens after in the green,
Has the bushes shine still brighter;
Over old tombstones
Spray brown mosquito swarms.

Sunny Afternoon

A bough rocks me in deepest blue.
In the frolicsome, autumn leaf tangle
Moths flicker, drunken and crazed.
In the meadow axe blows resound.

My mouth bites into red berries
And in the leafage light and shadow sways.
For long hours golden dust falls
Crackling in the brown ground.

The thrush chortles from the bushes
And frolicking the autumn leaf tangle
All noisily rains down over me—
Fruits are loosed glowing and heavy.

Aeon

An animal face in the brown green
Glows at me timidly, the bushes gleam.
In the far distance an old fountain sings
With child voices. There I listen.

The wild jackdaws mock me
And all around the birches veil themselves.
I stand silent before a fire of tares
And softly images paint themselves,

On golden ground an ancient myth of love.
Over the hill the clouds spread their silence.
Over the ghostly pond-mirror
Fruits beckon, glowing and heavy.

Dream of an Afternoon

Silence! The ancient one is passing;
And once more his step turns to dusk.
Shadows float up and down—
Birches, that hang in the window.

And on the old hill of vines
The roundelay of cavorting fauns again,
And the slender nymphs rise
Softly from the fountain’s mirror.

Listen! A distant thunderstorm threatens.
Incense reeks from dark cresses,
Moths celebrate silent masses
Before the decayed flower trellises.

Luminous Hour

On the hill distant sound of flutes.
In marshes the fauns skulk,
Where concealed in reed and seaweed
Languid slender nymphs repose.

In the pond’s mirror-glass
Golden butterflies are in rapture,
Quietly a dual-backed creature
Stirs in the velvety grass.

Sobbing in the birch grove
Orpheus breathes tender love babble,
Gently and jokingly nightingales
Chime in with his song.

Phoebus a flame grows
Yet on Aphrodite’s mouth,
And sprayed through with scent of amber—
Darkly the hour turns red.

Childhood Memory

In the afternoon the sun shines alone,
And softly it wafts away the honey bees’ tone.
In the garden the sisters’ voices whisper—
There the boy listens in the woodshed,

Still feverish over book and image.
Wearily the lindens sink down into the blue.
Drowned in the ether a heron hangs lifeless,
Fantastic shadow forms play by the fence.

The sisters pass silently into the house,
And soon their white frocks flicker
Vaguely from bright rooms,
And confused the uproar of bushes fades.

The boy strokes the cat’s hair,
Bewitched by the mirror of her eyes.
Far off on a hill an organ sound
Lifts wonderfully to heaven.

An Evening

At evening the sky was clouded over.
And through the grove filled with silence and horror
Drove a dark-golden shudder.
Evening bells died away in the distance.

The earth has drunk icy water,
At the forest’s edge a fire lay smouldering,
The wind sang softly with angel voices
And trembling I drop to my knees,

In the heather, in bitter cresses.
Far beyond clouds swam in silver laughter
Forsaken sentinels of love.
The heath was lonely and vast.

Season

Ruby veins crept into the foliage.
Then the pond lay still and wide.
By the forest’s edge lay scattered
Brown dust and bluish speckles.

A fisherman drew in his nets.
Dusk moved over the field.
But still a yard shone palely illumined
And maids bore fruit and wine.

Afterwards a shepherd’s song died far away.
Then huts stood bare and estranged.
The forest in grey death shroud
Awakened sad memories.

And overnight time became quiet
And as if down black holes in the forest
A host of ravens flew and moved
Towards the city’s distant chimes.

In Wine Country

The sun paints autumnal courtyard and walls,
The fruit gathered in heaps all around,
Before them huddle the pauper children.
A gust of wind thins out the old lindens.

Through the gate a shower golden rains
And weary the women blessed with child
Rest on mouldering benches.
Drunkards swing glass and jug.

A vagabond has his fiddle come alive
And smocks swell lustily in the dance.
Rough brown bodies embrace.
From vacant windows eyes gaze out.

From the fountain mirror stench climbs.
And black, decayed, solitary
Dusking around the hills of vines.
A bird migration sweeps swiftly south.

The Dark Valley

A cortège of crows breaks up in the pines
And green evening mists rise
And as in a dream the sound of violins
And maids hurry to dance at the inn.

You hear drunken cries and laughter,
Through ancient yews passes a shudder.
In corpse-pale window panes
The shadows of dancers flit past.

All reeks of wine and thyme
And through the forest lonely calling.
On steps the beggar folk hearken
And witlessly give themselves to prayer.

In the hazel bush a deer bleeds to death.
Soundless immense arcades of trees,
Overcharged with icy clouds.
Lovers rest entwined by the pond.

Summer Dawn

In green ether suddenly a star flickers
And in the hospital they sense morning.
Concealed in the bush the thrush madly trills
And dreamlike and distant sound the cloister bells.

A statue stands in the square, lonely and slender
And in the courtyards red flower-beds dawn.
Around wooden balconies the air quivers with sultriness
And flies stagger softly in the stench.

The silver curtain there by the window veils
Entwined limbs, lips, tender breasts.
From the tower scaffolds a hard hammering resounds
And the moon decays white in the heavens.

A ghostly dream-chord drifts away
And monks plunge from the church gates
And stride forth lost to the infinite.
In the sky looms a bright summit.

In Moonlight

A host of vermin, mice, rats
Cavorts in the hallway, that in moonlight shimmers.
The moon cries out as if in a dream and mewls.
Tiny leaf shadows tremble at the window.

Now and then birds chirrup in the branches
And spiders creep over black walls.
Through empty passages pale flecks shiver.
An uncanny silence dwells in the house.

In the courtyard lights seem to float
Over rotten wood, mouldered clutter.
Then a star glistens in a black pond.
Figures still there from bygone times.

You yet see tracings of other things
And a writing, faded on mouldering sketches,
Perhaps the colours of bright pictures:
Angel, in song before the throne of Mary.

Fairy Tale

In yellow sunshine the skyrockets sparkle;
This mask-like crowd in the old park.
Landscapes are mirrored in the grey sky
And sometimes you hear the horrible cry of the faun.

Its golden grin emerges garish in the grove.
In battling turmoil, bees run riot in the cresses,
A rider trots past on a pale-white horse.
In uneven rows the poplars glow.

The little girl, drowned today in the pond,
Rests now a saint in the bare chamber
And often a shimmering of clouds blinds her.

The old ones go into the greenhouse dulled and sick
To water their blooms, that wither.
At the gate dream-confused voices whisper.

Lament (III)

The girlfriend juggling with green flowers
Plays in moon gardens—
O! what glows behind hedges of yew!
Golden mouth, which stirs my lips,
And they ring out like the stars
Over the brook Kidron.
But the starry nebulas sink over the plain,
Dance wild and inexpressible.
O! your lips my female friend
Pomegranate lips
Ripen on my crystalline mouth of shells.
Heavily it rests on us
The golden silence of the plain.
Heavenwards steams the blood
Of the infants
Murdered by Herod.

Springtime of the Soul (II)

Flowers strewn blue and white
Strive cheerfully upon the ground.
Silvery weaves the evening hour,
Balmy wasteland, loneliness.

Life now blossoms with peril,
Sweet rest around cross and grave.
A chiming bell,
All seems magical.

A willow softly hovers in the ether,
Here and there a light flickers.
Spring promises and whispers
And the damp ivy shivers.

Deliciously flourish bread and wine,
Organ sound of marvellous power.
And around cross and passion
Gleams a ghostly light.

O! How lovely are these days.
Through twilight the children go;
Blue already the winds are blowing.
Distant mocks the thrushes’ tapping.

Western Twilight

A faun cry cavorts through sparks,
Cascades of light foam in parks,
Metallic vapours at the steel arcades
Of the city, which rolls around the sun.

A god speeds shimmering with a team of tigers
Past women and shining bazaars,
Filled with flowing gold and countless wares.
Now and then the slave folk wail.

A drunken ship turns on the canal
Sluggish in the green sheaves of sun.
A cheerful concert of colours
Rises softly before the hospital.

A Quirinal sculpture displays dark splendour.
In mirrors colourful crowds circle
Upon arches of bridges and tracks.
Before benches a demon palely awakes.

A dreamer sees women with child
Glide past in slimy radiance,
A dying man hears ringing of bells—
A gold hoard glows softly in the horror.

Daydreaming at Evening

Where you go at eve is not the angel’s shadow
And beauty! Exchange of grief and gentler forgetting;
The stranger’s hand gropes coolness and cypresses
And his soul is gripped by an astonishing languidness.

The market is empty of red fruits and wreaths.
Peacefully the church’s black pageantry attunes,
In a garden the gentle notes of play resound,
Where after the meal the weary find each other.

A cart darts, a spring so far off through beds of green.
There a childhood appears dreamlike and timeworn,
Angela’s stars, enclosed piously into a mystical image,
And calmly ripens the evening coolness.

White poppy frees the limbs of the lonely musing one,
So he sees righteousness and God’s deep happiness.
From the garden his shadow strays here in white silk
And inclines over mournful waters.

Whispering branches thrust into the abandoned room
And lovers and quivering of tiny evening flowers.
Corn and golden vines gird the site of man,
But a glimmer of moon muses after the dead.

Winter Walk in A-minor

Often red globes emerge from branches,
The long snowfall blanketed soft and black.
The priest escorts the dead one.
Nights filled with mask celebrations.

Then tousled crows sweep over the village;
In books fairy tales are miraculously written.
At the window an old man’s hair flutters.
Demons drive through the sickening soul.

The well freezes in the yard. In darkness plunge
Decayed stairways and the wind blows
Through old shafts, which lie buried.
The palate tastes the frost’s sharp piquancy.

Ever Darker

The wind, which stirs crimson treetops,
Is God’s breath, which ebbs and flows.
The black village rises before the forest;
Three shadows are cast over the hill.

With paucity the valley dusks below
And all grows silent for the humble.
In garden and hall an earnestness greets
That craves to conclude the day.

Pious and dark an organ sounds.
Mary in blue vestment there enthroned
Cradling the infant in her hand.
The night is long, star-bright.

December

At evening jugglers trek through the forest
On quaint wagons, little horses.
A hoard of gold seems locked in clouds.
On the white lowlands villages are painted.

The wind swings signpost and stave black and cold.
A raven follows the sullen comrades.
From the skies a beam falls on bloody gutters
And softly a funeral cortège drifts to the cemetery.

Close by the shepherd’s hut fades in the grey,
In the pond gleams the lustre of old treasures;
The farmers sat in the tavern for wine.

A boy glides furtively to a woman.
You still see the verger in the vestry
And reddish objects, beautiful and dark.

(Untitled)

A carpet, wherein the afflicted landscape pales
Perhaps the sea of Galilee, a boat in the gale
From storm clouds things golden fall
Insanity, that grips the gentle human.
The ancient waters gurgle a blue laughter.

And sometimes a dark pit yawns wide.
The possessed are mirrored in cold metals
Blood-drops fall on shining platters
And a countenance decays in black night.
Flags, which murmur in gloomy vaults.

Others recollect the flight of birds
Over the gibbet the ravens' mystical signs
In spiky grasses sink coppery serpents
In incense cushions, a smile lustful and clever.

Good Friday's children stand blindly by fences
In the mirror dark gutters brimful with carrion
The sighing convalescence of the dying
And angels who pass through white eyes
From dusking lids golden redemption.

Delirium

Black snow, which runs from the roofs;
Into your brow a red finger dips
Into the cold chamber blue ice snow sinks,
The naked mirrors of lovers.
The head breaks into heavy pieces and senses
After shadows in the mirror blue ice snow,
The cold smile of a dead whore.
In carnation perfume weeps the evening wind.

At the Edge of Old Waters

(version 2)

Dark reading of the waters: broken brow in mouth of night,
Sighing in black pillows the boy’s bluish shadow,
The rustling of the maple, steps in the old park,
Chamber concerts that on a spiral staircase die out,
Perhaps a moon, which softly mounts the steps.
The gentle voices of nuns in the decayed church,
A blue tabernacle, which slowly opens,
Stars, which fall upon your bony hands,
Perhaps a walk through abandoned rooms,
The flute’s blue tone in the hazel bush—so softly.

Along Walls

An old path it goes along
By wild gardens and lonely walls.
Thousand-year-old yews tremble
In the rising falling song of the wind.

The moths dance, as if death is nigh,
Sobbing my glance drinks shadows and lights.
In the distance women’s faces float
Ghostly painted in the blue.

A smile quivers in the sunshine,
While onwards I slowly stride;
Boundless love provides escort.
Softly the hard rock goes green.

(Untitled)

A paleness, resting in the shadow of decayed stairways—
That at night one ascends in silver form
And wanders beneath the cloister.

In coolness of tree and without pain
Breathes the perfect
And has no need of autumn stars—

Thorns, over which the other falls.
His sad fall
The lovers ponder long after.

(Untitled)

The stillness of the dead loves the ancient garden
The madwoman who dwelt in blue rooms,
At evening the still shape appears at the window

But she draws the yellow curtain—
The trickling of glass beads recalled our childhood,
At night we found a black moon in the forest

Gentle sonata sounds in a mirror’s blueness
Long embraces
Her smile glides over the mouth of the dying.

(Untitled)

With rosy steps stone sinks in the moor
Song of gliding and black laughter
Figures pass in and out of rooms
And bony death grins in a black barque.

Pirate on the canal in red wine
Whose mast and sail often shattered in the storm.
The drowned nudge purple against the stone
Of the bridges. Steely jangles the call of the guards.

But sometimes the gaze listens in candlelight
And follows the shadows on mouldered walls
And dancers with sleep-entwined hands.

Night, that black breaks on your head
And the dead, who turn over in beds
Grasp the marble with broken hands.

(Untitled)

The blue night has gently risen on our brows.
Softly our putrefied hands touch
Sweet bride!

Pallid becomes our countenance, moon pearls
Melted in green pond meadow.
Stony we behold our stars.

O Agony! The guilty wander in the garden
The shadows in wild embrace,
So that in great fury tree and beast sank over them.

Gentle harmonies, when in crystal waves
We travel through the still night
A rosy angel steps from the graves of lovers.

(Untitled)

O the dwelling in stillness of the dusking garden,
When the eyes of the sister opened round and dark in the brother,
The crimson of their broken mouths
Melted in the coolness of evening.
Heart-wrenching hour.

September ripened the golden pear. Sweetness of incense
And by the old fence the dahlia flames
Say! Where were we, when we went by in a black skiff
In the evening,

The crane passed over. The freezing arms
Held black embraced, and within the blood ran.
And moist blue around our temples. Poor child.
Out of knowing eyes a dark race deeply ponders.

In the Evening

A blue brook, path and evening by decayed huts.
Children play with blue and red balls behind dark shrubs;
Some exchange the brow and hands rot in brown leafage.

In bony stillness glints the heart of the lonely one,
A row boat rocks on blackish waters.
Through the dark copse hair and laughter of brown maids flutters.

The shades of the old ones cross the flight of a small bird;
On their temples the secret of blue flowers.
Others sway on black benches in the evening wind.

Golden sighs softly die out in the bare branches
Of the chestnut; a sound of summer’s dark cymbals,
When on the decayed staircase the female stranger appears.

Judgement

Huts of childhood are in autumn,
Decayed hamlet; dark forms,
Singing mothers on the evening wind;
At windows Angelus and folded hands.

Dead birth; on green ground
Blue flowers' secret and stillness.
Crimson mouth parted by madness:
Dies irae—grave and stillness.

Groping along green thorns;
In sleep: blood-spit, hunger and laughter;
Fire in the village, awakening in the green;
Dread and swaying on a burbling barque.

Or once more on a staircase of wood
The female stranger's white shadow leans—
Poor sinner stumbling in the blue
Left his carrion behind for lilies and rats.

(Untitled)

Wind, white voice, which whispers near the sleeper’s temple
In rotten branches darkness crouches in his crimson hair
Long evening bell, sunk in the mud of the pond
And over it the yellow blooms of summer incline.
Concert of bumblebees and blue flies in wild grass and loneliness,
Where once Ophelia passed with stirring steps
Gentle demeanour of madness. Fearfully the green ripples through reeds
And the water lilies’ yellow leaves, in hot nettles a carcass rots
Awakening sunflowers childlike flutter about the sleeper.

September evening, or the dark call of the shepherds,
Perfume of thyme. Glowing spray of iron in the forge
Mightily it rears up a black horse; the maid’s hyacinthine lock
Snatches after the fervour of its crimson nostrils.
The cry of the partridge stiffens to yellow walls a plough rusts in rotting manure
Softly red wine trickles, the gentle guitar at the inn.
O death! The sick soul’s arching in decay silence and childhood.

With faces insane the bats flutter up.

(Untitled)

O the leaf-stripped beeches and blackish snow.
Softly blows the north wind. Here on the brown path
A darkness walked months past.

Alone in autumn. Always the flakes fall
In the bare branches
In the dry reeds; green crystal sings in the pond

Empty the hut of straw; childlike
Are birches blown on the night wind.
O the way that gently freezes in the darkness.
And the dwelling place in rosy snow

To Novalis

(version 2)

In dark earth rests the holy stranger.
God took the lament from his gentle mouth,
When he sank into his blossoming.
A blue flower
His song lives on in the nocturnal house of pain.

Nocturnal Lament

(version 2)

Night has risen over the rumpled brow
With lovely stars
Over the pain-petrified countenance,
A wild beast gorged on the loving heart
A fiery angel
Plunges with shattered breast on stony field,
Once more a vulture flutters up.
Woe in lament eternal
Fire, earth and blue spring mingle.

To Johanna

Often I hear your steps
Resound through the lanes.
In the little brown garden
The blueness of your shadow.

In the summer house at dusk
I sat silent before my wine.
A drop of blood
Fell from your temple.

In the singing glass
Hour of eternal melancholy.
From stars a snowy wind
Blows through the leaves.

Each death endures,
Night the pale man.
Your purple mouth
A wound lives in me.

As if I came from the green
Hills of firs and legends
Of our homeland
For so long forgotten—

Who are we? Blue lament
Of a mossy forest source,
Where the violets
In spring are secretly fragrant.

A peaceful village in summer
Once sheltered the childhood

Of our race,
Dying out now on the evening—

Hill of the white grandchildren.
We dream the horrors
Of our nocturnal blood
Shadows in the stony town.

Melancholy (III)

The blue soul has silently closed,
In the open window the brown forest sinks,
The stillness of dark beasts; at the bottom
The mill grinds, clouds rest floods by the footbridge,

Golden strangers. A procession of horses
Gallops red in the village. The garden brown and cold.
The aster freezes, so delicately painted on the fence
Almost far flown the sunflowers’ gold.

The voices of whores; dew is poured out
Onto hard grass and stars white and cold.
See death painted in fair shadows,
Tear-filled every countenance and closed.

To Lucifer

(version 3)

Lend your flame to the spirit, glowing melancholy;
Sighing the head rises into midnight,
At the greening spring hill; where before
A gentle lamb bled, the deepest pain
Endured; but the dark one follows the shadow
Of evil, or he lifts moist wings
To the golden disk of the sun and a bell sound
Convulses his pain-riven breast,
Wild hope; darkness of flaming downfall.

Daydreaming

(version 1)

Gentle life grows in the stillness
Step and heart hastens through the green
Lovers linger by hedges,
That swell heavily with fragrances.

The beech ponders; moist bells
Fell silent, the lad sings
The fire embraces darkness
O patience and silent rejoicing.

Blithe of spirit till the end
Beautifully inspired, silent night,
Golden wine, proffered by
A sister’s blue hands.

Psalm (II)

Silence; when the blind sank against the autumnal wall,
Hearkening with rotten temples, to the flight of ravens;
Golden stillness of autumn, the face of the father in flickering sun
At evening into peace of brown oaks the old village declines,
Red hammering of the forge, a pounding heart.
Silence; with slow hands the maidservant hides her hyacinthine brow
Beneath fluttering sunflowers. Fear and silence
Breaking eyes fill the darkening room, the hesitant steps
Of old women, flight of purple mouth that slowly dies out in darkness.

Silent evening in wine. From low-hanging beams falls
A nocturnal moth, nymph buried in bluish sleep.
In the yard the farmhand slaughters a lamb, the sweet aroma of blood
Clouds our brows, the sombre coolness of wells.
In mourning the dying asters' melancholy, golden voices on the wind.
When night falls you gaze on me with mouldered eyes,
In blue stillness your cheeks have fallen to dust.
So softly dies a weed fire, into silence the black hamlet in the valley
As if the cross descended from blue Calvary,
And the mute earth cast out her dead.

Age

More spiritually shine the roses
By the garden fence;
O silent soul!

In the cool vine leaves
Grazes the crystalline sun;
O holy purity!

An old man with noble hands
Serves ripened fruits.
O glance of love!

The Sunflowers

You golden sunflowers,
Deeply inclined towards death,
You humility-filled sisters
In such stillness
Helian’s year closes
Mountain coolness.

Then with kisses grows pale
His dark brow
Amidst those golden
Flowers of melancholy
By silent darkness
The spirit determined.

So earnest O summer twilight.
From weary mouth
Your golden breath sank into the valley
To the places of shepherds,
Sinks into leafage.
A vulture rises at the forest’s edge
The stony head—
An eagle’s glance
Shines through grey cloud
Night.

Wildly glow
The red roses by the fence
Glowing dies
The loving in wave of green
A faded rose.

CHRONOLOGY

1887 Georg Trakl is born during the evening of 3rd February at the Schaffner house on Waagplatz in Salzburg, to Tobias and Maria Catharina Trakl.

1892 Trakl enters the Übungschule des Lehererseminars (primary school). Religious teaching in the Protestant rectory.

1897 Trakl enrols at the humanist-inclined Staatsgymnasium (state secondary school).

1905 Trakl abandons his studies to train as a pharmacist. He embarks on a period of work practice in Carl Hinterhuber's pharmacy "Zum weissen Engel" on the Linzergasse. (This Apotheke still exists today and is now called "The Angel".)

1906 Performance of dramatic pieces "Totentag" and "Fata Morgana" in the Stadttheater, Salzburg. Both are considered a failure by their author after a lacklustre reception.

1908 First appearance of a poem ("Morning Song", in the paper *Salzburger Volksblatt*). Termination of pharmacy practice. Trakl enrols to study pharmacy at the University of Vienna.

1909 At the suggestion of his close friend Erhard Buschbeck, also in Vienna, he begins assembling his poems for a first collection.

1910 Meeting with the artist Oskar Kokoschka, leading to long-term friendship. Achieves his Master's degree in pharmacy. Death of Tobias Trakl. Enters voluntarily for a year's military practice.

1911 End of military service in Vienna. Returns to Salzburg disillusioned with life in the capital. Assumes a position at "Zum weissen Engel" again, with responsibility for prescriptions.

1912 April: Accepts a new post in the pharmacy of the military hospital in Innsbruck. Crucial meeting with Ludwig von Ficker, the publisher of the bi-monthly journal *Der Brenner*, who

publishes the first poem, “Suburb in the Föhn”; Trakl’s work is subsequently included in every issue of the journal. Ficker becomes the unofficial guardian and benefactor of the vulnerable, poverty-stricken poet. Trakl regularly visits Kokoschka, who paints *The Bride of the Wind*, inspired by his friend’s poetry and his own doomed love affair with Alma Mahler. In autumn Trakl joins the reserves.

1913 The manuscript of *Poems* is accepted by Kurt Wolff Publishers (Leipzig). Trakl moves to Vienna and works as an accounts clerk in the War Ministry. Communication with Karl Kraus and Adolf Loos. Vacation trip to Venice, which Trakl describes as “the gateway to hell”. Returns in despair to Innsbruck.

1914 Submits the manuscript of *Sebastian in Dream* to Kurt Wolff publishers. Travels to Berlin to meet his sister Grete. In March meets the poet Else Lasker-Schüler, who later dedicates two poems to their brief friendship. Along with Rilke, receives financial endowment from Ludwig Wittgenstein after guidance from Ficker. Outbreak of war. On 24th August Trakl departs on a military convoy in the role of medical orderly. Trakl’s unit, Field Hospital 7/14, stationed in Galicia, is obliged to care for the traumatized and wounded after the battle of Grodek. He is admitted to the garrison hospital in Kraków for observation following his mental collapse and suicide attempt. On 24/25 October Ludwig von Ficker visits him in Kraków. On 3rd November Georg Trakl dies of heart failure following an overdose of cocaine smuggled in by a sympathetic guard. He is buried in the Rakowicki Cemetery in Kraków. At Ficker’s request Trakl’s remains are moved to the cemetery in Mühlau near Innsbruck in 1925.

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